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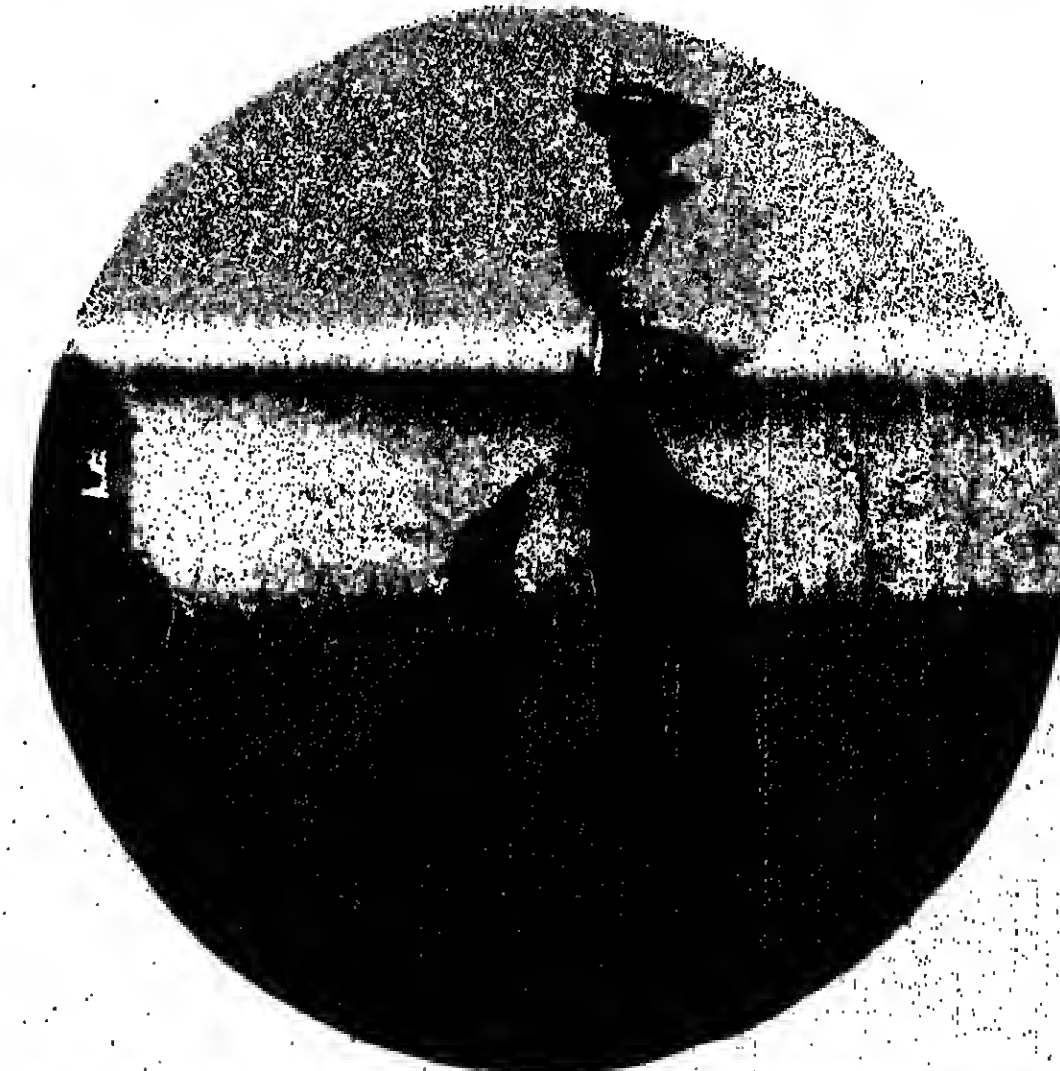
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Policy and the public purse

Burke Trend

LEO PLATZKY
Getting and Spending
240pp, Oxford: Blackwell, £12.
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JOEL BARNETT
Inside the Treasury
200pp, Deutsch, £8.95.
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"If we are asked what are, or should be, the limits of public expenditure, in one sense this involves value judgments about the kind of society we want." We may, I think, agree with Leo Platzky on this point; but we may then be provoked to ask by whom those judgments are, or should be, formulated. The orthodox answer, to which Platzky himself subscribes, is that they are made by Ministers, who are the elected representatives of the people, and that the function of civil servants consists mainly of advising their political masters about the range of policy options open to them and the methodology of implementing the decisions implicit in the choices which they make. But if the plain man has instinctive doubts about the adequacy of so simple and arbitrary a distinction between ends and means, they are unlikely to be wholly dispelled by either of the two books under review.

Platzky is concerned with the means rather than the ends; but when he admits, in a revealing aside, that "I took naturally to the austere Treasury ethos towards the use of public money", he is to some extent giving the game away. Evidently, the Treasury has an ethos of its own; and that ethos favours austerity. Spending money, like eating people, is wrong. Here, certainly, is a value judgment; but by whom is it taken? Not - at least not willingly - by the Cabinet as a whole; nearly all its members, as Joel Barnett testifies with rueful candour, would like to spend more money rather than less, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer is normally a lone voice in preaching economy. Why then does he preach it? Because his advisers counsel him to do so. And why do they offer this counsel? Because the facts of the situation, correctly interpreted, permit no alternative.

Treasury officials, in my experience, are decent, honourable men; endowed with above average intelligence; and having their fair share of human

warmth and sympathy. But they are also realists, sadly aware of the apparently incurable propensity of mankind to succumb to the temptations of extravagance and self-indulgence; and the desk of each of them displays, metaphorically if not literally, the precept of the good Butler (the Bishop not the politician, alive dissented) that "Things and actions are what they are; and their consequences will be what they will be. Why then should we desire to be deceived?" The Treasury has an intellectual conviction, founded on not inconsiderable experience, that you cannot get a quart out of a pint pot; and from this flows a moral conviction that it is wrong to deceive yourself, to say nothing of others, that you can, or should try to, do so. If you do, it will assuredly end in tears. But need it? Why not simply enlarge the pot? This is a solution which has an irresistible attraction for politicians. The reader who has the patience - and the stamina - to follow Platzky through the successive stages in the development of the concept of public expenditure will discover why all too often it is not a solution at all but simply an aggravation of the problem.

To begin with, there is the conceptual question - how large is a pint? Platzky's chapter on "What is public expenditure?" should be required reading for all, whether politicians or administrators, who are tempted to venture into this semantic minefield; and they should be compelled thereafter to pass a stiff test on the relationship between public expenditure and the gross domestic product (GDP) before they can expect to be accepted as qualified practitioners. In this particular discipline, but, mercifully, it was not always so. In the good old days public expenditure meant merely the sum of separate departmental programmes; and all that you needed in order to deal with it was the simple ability to add two and two together and to decide that the answer ought to be rather less than four. Nobody, in short, made any serious attempt to formulate a reasoned judgment about the scale of aggregate acceptable expenditure; and the elaborate ritual of Budget Day really amounted to little more than the Treasury's adding up the individual departmental bids and considering whether the total was "too much" or could be made to be "just right" in

relation to whatever changes in taxation the Chancellor of the Exchequer had in mind.

This final and critical act in the process, however, the act of striking the "correct" balance between expenditure and income, was something which he kept very much to himself. And he did the exercise only once a year at a time. Implicit in this procedure was a tacit, but important, assumption, recognized and accepted by the rest of Whitehall, that the Treasury, as the department holding the purse which paid the piper, was entitled to call the tune and that, in default of any other centre of authority for the purpose, it was the Treasury's rightful function to exercise whatever degree of constraint and co-ordination of separate departmental programmes might be required in order to ensure that the totality of public expenditure was held within the limits which the Treasury itself prescribed. And from this assumption flowed the proprietorial attitude which the Treasury has always tended to display towards the revenue surrendered by the taxpayer to the Exchequer; in an undefinable but subtle and pervasive way this became the Treasury's own money and the Treasury alone was entitled to say how, in accordance with its self-prescribed standards of prudence and thrift, that money should be spent. As a result, the Treasury maintained for many years a primacy which extended beyond the merely financial concerns of the Government and came to comprise the oversight and co-ordination of Governmental policies as a whole. Its Permanent Secretary became the Official Head of the Home Civil Service, enjoying considerable powers of patronage in relation to senior appointments throughout Whitehall. It recruited its own élite by transferring to itself the most talented staff of other departments, who regarded it as an honour to be invited to leave them; its pre-eminence was absolute and its word was final; from its Rhodamantine judgments there was no appeal.

After the war, largely in response to the impact of Keynesian economics and the rising demands of the new welfare state, an effort was made to deal with matters rather more systematically, by attempting to rotate individual decisions on public expenditure to a comprehensive survey

of the real resources of the economy, extending over several years ahead; it was agreed that one must first discover how much the pot really contained, or could be made to contain in the foreseeable future, before deciding whether it could be persuaded, in any given year, to yield only a pint or rather more. The system - known to the cognoscenti as PESC, an acronym derived from the Public Expenditure Survey Committee which supervised its operation - was constructed in terms of functional programmes rather than spending authorities; the programmes themselves were coded not in current prices but in terms of constant prices; and in due course novel and unprecedented bodies - such as the National Economic Development Council and the Department of Economic Affairs - appeared on the scene, challenging the Treasury's sole authority to decide the limits of public expenditure and offering alternative, usually more attractive and optimistic, interpretations of what the nation could afford to spend in terms of the likely growth in the real resources at its disposal. But when it came to translating the calculation into the financial terms required by the annual Budget occasion in the House of Commons, these innovators were not allowed to meddle with the other side of the account; taxation policy remained the strict preserve of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, closely protected by his tight-lipped experts somewhere deep in the heart of the Treasury's citadel, their hands keeping a firm hold on the levers of fiscal and monetary power.

Was it partly as a result of this dichotomy between planning and control that the PESC system began to falter in its aim? In 1963 the NEDC postulated an economic growth rate of 4 per cent a year, a figure which proved quite unrealistic but nevertheless made it politically impossible to plan long-term public expenditure on any other basis, despite the inevitable strain on the balance of payments. A year or so later the DEA adopted, as the basis of its National Plan, which Platzky amusingly describes as "a sort of What's On in Whitehall", an even higher rate of assumed economic growth, which, by tilting the allocation of resources still further towards public expenditure rather than the balance of payments, contributed directly to the devaluation of 1967. Two years later the DEA was quietly and

unobtrusively disbanded; and the Treasury came back into its own, to resume the unhampered control of public expenditure with such success that, within a short time, the balance of payments on both current and capital account was more favourable than at any point since the war - but only at the cost of the rising prices and rising wage claims which finally led to the fall of the first Wilson Government.

Under its Conservative successor, the PESC system, now partially discredited as "purely incremental", was reinforced by a system of Programmes Analysis and Review (PAR) which sought to reintroduce a qualitative element into the control of public expenditure by subjecting selected departmental policies to critical examination in cost-benefit terms. But this system, too, proved inadequate to the pressures to which it was subjected. As Platzky observes, "To the extent that the PAR system was designed to take a radical look at policies and not merely at methods of carrying them out, there was a lack of reality about the idea that the whole organic process of policy formation could somehow be subordinated to a mechanical procedure. Spending Ministers and their departments simply did not put the crucial policy issues in their fields on the PAR list." In other words, value judgment stepped just at the points where it was most important that it should begin.

It is not wholly surprising, therefore, that inflation continued to rise remorselessly, compounded by the re-emergence of unemployment on a scale which prompted the alleged U-turn halfway through the Heath Government. But Ministers still adhered to the constant prices system in planning public expenditure, with the result that programmes were maintained, and sometimes expanded, in volume forms no matter how great the rise in the amount of money involved. In response to the renewed pressure on the balance of payments, the Government was compelled to adopt a floating rate for the pound in mid-1972; but, despite this easing of the strain on the economy, the rise in public expenditure began once more to outstrip the growth of the GDP and by the beginning of 1974 the Government was no longer able to enforce its will against determined industrial resistance to an incomes policy which had been designed to keep prices

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inflation within reasonable limits but was fatally undermined by the dramatic increase in oil prices.

Under the second Wilson Government, the depressingly familiar process seemed set to begin yet once more.

In its first year public expenditure rose by 12.2 per cent; the GDP, on the other hand, showed a small absolute decline. In Plaitzky's words:

"The divorce between the collective decision-making process on public expenditure and the Treasury's budget-making process remained intact. But the Treasury was beginning to reassert itself; and money, more money, was ready to return to the centre of the stage. Partly in reinforcement of an incomes policy which strove to gear cash provision to a prescribed rate of wage increases, the concept of cash limits became fashionable, with the implication that, no matter what volume programmes were approved at constant prices, their transition into cash provision at current prices would be limited in advance in cash terms. Gradually, as Plaitzky says, 'the emphasis was being shifted from medium-term planning to short-term control, though still against the background of a medium-term dimension.' He himself makes no secret of his desire to get rid of the constant prices hypothesis and to frame forward surveys in current prices or, more accurately, in terms of the prices expected to current in the future years with which successive surveys were concerned. He could not press the point too far since, as he admits, 'if we were to do our cash projections on the assumption of 5 or 10 per cent inflation and if prices actually went up by 15 per cent a year, it was not to be expected that the Government would cut the physical size of programmes year by year to fit the cash projections.' But this, or something very like this, is precisely what the present Government, coming into office after the Callaghan winter of discontent, has set itself to do and its first White Paper in March 1980, announced uncompromisingly that:

"The Government intend to reduce public expenditure progressively in volume terms over the next four years." Although performance fell short of promise in the first year, largely as the result of an industrial recession of unforeseeable severity, the issue of the struggle is still to be decided; and, meanwhile, money has been largely restored to its primary as the indifferent measure of all things and the Treasury is more cautious and realistic in its approach to the short run. In 1981 it managed to carry the doctrine of cash limits to its logical conclusion: by at last abandoning constant prices and carrying out the forward survey in cash terms. Even Plaitzky is taken aback when he contemplates the possible results: "It defies credibility that programmes in 1981-5 should be predestined to volume cuts across the board in order to conform to a cash figure fixed in 1981"; and he makes it clear that he would prefer a more cautious and realistic approach in the form of a compromise between cash planning in the first year of a survey period and programming in real terms for the subsequent years. He concludes, with true Treasury caution, that there is no real need to foreclose our future options in this respect. But he adds: "and here is the nub of his book - that 'the proportion of GDP going to public expenditure should be determined within a reasonable margin of error by economic and social policy decisions, not by jobs of control'."

There, in nothing progressive or democratic about poor financial control, wasteful use of resources or inflationary financing. It is a value judgment which rings true; and here, in a properly political definition of economy, the historical Treasury ethos finds its authentic contemporary expression.

But how far is it accepted as a criterion by the Ministers with whom Plaitzky views the first decision on issues of policy should rest? Joel Barnett deals with only a few years of the period which Plaitzky chronicles - the five years from 1974 during which he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's first lieutenant, with particular responsibility for controlling public expenditure. He confesses in his introduction that he started as an optimistic success. He hoped we would achieve and to do all those things we had been fighting for in the Labour

movement; and yet, five years later "I finished as an undoubted pessimist, at least as far as Britain's general economic and industrial performance is concerned." What went wrong? Why did it prove impossible to extract the quart from that obstinate pint pot? There was evidently no question of any personal or even any intellectual incompatibility between the politician and the civil servant who was his principal adviser. He got on well with Plaitzky, whom he describes as "my most fascinating Permanent Secretary, who had been in the Fabian Society before joining the Civil Service." (And what, incidentally, is one supposed to infer from that?) Moreover, he had, like Plaitzky, an instinctive disposition towards economy and austerity, a disposition fostered by a modest domestic upbringing and an invaluable introduction to politics at the grass roots. Unlike some of our current political mentors he understood from the beginning what makes the ordinary voter tick. He should have been well placed to bring to the control of public expenditure the kind of informed and sensitive political judgment which Plaitzky, in common with all right-thinking civil servants, regards as the special prerogative of Ministers. Why, then, does he regard his four years in office as a failure?

A careful reading of his book suggests several reasons. At the outset, in Opposition, "We in the shadow Treasury team did little or nothing about how much, or rather how little, total public expenditure would be available and how it should be divided in terms of priorities." But why not? What prevented them from pondering these problems, at least provisionally, and examining, at least hypothetically, various possible solutions for them? There may be material here for those would-be reformers of the Parliamentary process who believe that it is important to equip the shadow Government with a permanent set of shadow bureaucrats, as its own source of information, advice and warning. Later, in office, Barnett tries to explain how "the system could defeat even Ministers like myself, who had remained in one post for a rather long time by modern standards." But how did it defeat them? Partly by confronting them with a bewildering diversity of choice: "We had a whole range of different options... on every conceivable kind of taxation from income tax to gambling duties." But is not this precisely what officials are meant, and paid, to do? And how would Ministers react if they had reason to suppose that their advisers had not exposed to them the full scope of possible choices?

Then there was the tiresome business of Cabinet committees, where the Chief Secretary was almost inevitably in a minority of one and had painfully to learn the basic ploy of trying to persuade one spending Minister to come down against another Minister's plans, even if for no better or more logical reason than to protect his own departmental expenditure. Barnett roundly condemns such Ministerial meetings; they are "just about the worst possible way of arriving at sensible decisions." But he is human enough to describe, with a touch of gleeful satisfaction, how, on one occasion when the Cabinet were debating the reduction in expenditure which were the necessary price of assistance from the International Monetary Fund in 1976, "I got £180 million out of the £200 million for which I had asked, when I would have been quite happy to settle for £100 million." And he does not, at any point in his narrative, offer any alternative to the committee system which would be conceivable, within the "principle of collective responsibility."

Finally, once again there were those inescapable official advisers, hoping to rattle the Minister by putting up long and complex briefs which purportedly required immediate decision, and, when they were rebuffed, accepting rejection of their advice with the philosophical assurance which comes naturally to those who know that they will continue to be in power long after the Minister of the day has disappeared. At one point, towards the end of the last Labour Government, Barnett confronted with the decision on another round of expenditure cuts, complains that "Officials came up with a list that I can only assume they put to me out of pure defiance. I thought at the time that it was the kind of list they

would put to a Tory Chief Secretary; and that view was confirmed when I saw the first list of cuts of the new Conservative Government." Poor officials! Their professional ethos, grounded in the Treasury's gritty experience of successive Governments over many long years, had prompted them to do their best to prescribe for their patient as dispassionately as they could, with the kind of single-minded concern to cure him which would be much the same when the next patient appeared complaining of identical symptoms. In so doing, they saw themselves as serving the national interest; it was their misfortune - and the nation's? - that their value judgment on this point came into conflict with another value judgment, framed by reference to rather different criteria.

But Barnett is an honest and generous man; and he readily admits that it was not the fault of the officials that the economy did not achieve the rate of growth which the Government had adopted as its target. From the outset Ministers showed themselves reluctant to grapple with the real causes of the problem. "When they came into office in 1974, 'There was a sort of collective guilt complex round the Cabinet table which led to 'employment measures' that were far from being cost-effective. Indeed, overall they must have run directly counter to the main problem we faced, which was low productivity.' Five years later, as the Government staggered to its fall, things were no better; and Barnett can record that "there were still some Cabinet Ministers who viewed even private criticism of the trade unions as an act of treachery. Every conceivable excuse was sought for actions that, for many of us, were inexcusable." Barnett attributes a heavy burden of responsibility to his colleagues. It is, again, Ministers rather than officials who were to blame for the Government's failure to achieve either the correct balance between public and private expenditure, or the right priorities in public expenditure itself. "Expenditure priorities were generally decided on often out-dated and ill-considered plans made in Opposition, barely thought through as to their real value and never as to their relative priority in social, industrial or economic terms."

And so it came about that Ministers succumbed to the perennial temptation to cut capital, rather than current, expenditure, to defer expenditure on new prisons or hospitals rather than to reduce the number of wardens or nurses, thus contributing even further to the low rate of economic growth which they were constantly deploping. Conversely, far too much of the expenditure which they did sanction was pre-empted by non-selective subsidies to such categories as housing, transport and school meals, all such highly emotive areas that Barnett was forced to conclude that it was impossible to have them discussed rationally by Cabinet at all. The same reluctance to face the real problem lay at the root of the Government's failure to establish effective control over local authority expenditure, which both Barnett and Plaitzky identify as one of the largest of the holes in the leaking sieve. "Talk of 'increasing council house rents', says Barnett, 'and it was as if you were planning to snatch children from their mothers or put them to work down a mine.'"

The effects of this weakness of political perception and political will were aggravated by the intractable nature of the material with which Ministers were required to work - the unreliability of successive forecasts of the borrowing requirement; the arbitrary character of alternative decisions of public expenditure, which could vary so widely that on one occasion a single stroke of the pen could eliminate a billion from the estimated cost of debt interest; and, perhaps above all, the sheer unpredictability of those things which seemed to be beyond any human capacity for foresight or control, the maddening way in which cuts in public expenditure would either be subject to so long a time-lag in making their impact that the Government would have largely disappeared by the time that they began to do their work or would prove to have been unnecessary in the light of an unexpected recovery. "I could not, I am sure, have been interpreted when they were imposed, in a particularly



"Les Visiteurs" (c. 1924-25) by Fernand Léger, a painting in oils depicting the artist and Léonce Rosenberg during their visit to Rome in 1924. It was included in a recent exhibition of the Leffevre Gallery, 30 Bruton St, London W1, where it can still be seen until the end of August.

striking passage Plaitzky, describing the drastic reductions which, with much reluctance and after prolonged agonizing, the Government made in 1976 at the behest of the IMF, writes the epitaph on the whole sorry story in a single sentence: "Unknown to us at the time, unplanned shortfall was much bigger than the planned reductions which had brought the Government of the country to crisis point." Ploughing through the record of the Cabinet's interminable battles over this confused and confusing terrain, battles which Barnett chronicles with a wealth of statistical detail (and some entertaining side-kicks at the more weyward habits of some of his Ministerial colleagues), one realizes why he finds it all, as he says, "rather depressing."

It is a small masterpiece of understatement. The impact of the experience described in these two books is not merely depressing; it is also potentially damaging, not least because its pervasive implication of middle and mismanagement at the centre of Government may lead us to underestimate both the magnitude of our achievement in steering the economy through the traumatic years since the war and the difficulty of maintaining the same degree of instinctive self-confidence and self-respect in the no less problematical years which lie ahead. To a large extent the failures and frustrations which Barnett recalls are inevitable in a society which has shown itself able, over little more than the span of a generation, to sustain concurrently a major readjustment of its international status and a social revolution of unparalleled generosity while preserving a system of Parliamentary democracy which offers a more effective guarantee of individual political liberty than any other form of government. We are still the most decent, liberal and tolerant country in the world; and, if we have generated in the electorate an expectation of services and benefits which can only be satisfied by a level of public expenditure which is constantly exceeding our willingness to create the means whereby to pay for it, we have done so for commendable reasons of human sympathy, for a genuine attempt to improve the lot of the poor and the handicapped. We have, no need to repeat, no need to apologize for our system of social services and, so long as we retain an active social conscience, the level of public expenditure will continue to press hard on the capacity of the economy to sustain it at any realistic rate of economic growth, and, the

are more difficult, more important and more politically critical than any of the issues which are likely to confront them in their separate departmental identities. In one sense it is right and proper that, at that point, they should be left to themselves, to consult whatever resources of individual wisdom and conscience they can command. That is the essence of democratic accountability. In another sense, however, it is a defect in the system that they should lack the reinforcement of administrative machinery of their own, which would provide them with advice analogous to the advice which a department supplies to its Minister - with the difference that it would be advice provided by a staff under their collective authority, tendered to them in their collective capacity, and addressed to them in terms of their collective responsibility.

It was the lack of the capability to supply advice of this kind that Haldane deplored; and it was to remedy this deficiency that the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) was originally created in 1970, rather more than half a century after Haldane had submitted his report. As its name implies, it was to constitute, at the centre of Government, that nucleus of objective, undistracted, synoptic and multi-disciplinary assessment of problems of policy which Haldane recommended. It was to help the Government to stand back from the tangled detail of day-to-day administration, to view its achievements, and its prospects, in the wider perspective of its conception of the national interest in the longer term and, above all, to tackle that most difficult of all political tasks - finding time simply to think, to evaluate and to decide, with discipline, on discrimination. In its first few years the CPRS made a valiant attempt to supply that kind of service; but latterly it seems to have regressed into becoming merely one more piece of machinery for the examination of the more complex problems that arise between departments. It does not even rate a mention in the index to Barnett's book, while Plaitzky can record his conviction that, to his time, it made little significant difference to the operation of the Cabinet machinery as regards the control of public expenditure - which was his responsibility. If that is so, a great opportunity has been lost, for it is precisely in the area of the responsibility that a Government has to exercise its most difficult and most critical function - the function of reaching decisions and, therefore, exercising choices between alternative courses of action.

Throughout both the books which are the subject of this review, the word "priorities" recurs with a kind of mournful insistence. If only we could get the priorities right, all would be well. As Barnett recalls, "Nye Bevan once said, 'The language of priorities is the religion of Socialism.' In my experience of office this was a faith that had been lost in the sheer grind of day-to-day government." But priorities are, or should not be, a matter of only Socialist conviction; nor was Barnett's Government the only administration to suffer that particular loss of faith. As one follows Barnett and Plaitzky through their parallel heart-searchings about the control of public expenditure one is brought up short, time after time, by the paucity of reference, in any depth, to the great issues of national and international policy which were simultaneously confronting the Government of the day. It can fairly be argued in extension of both authors that they are addressing themselves to the question of public expenditure and that it is therefore inevitable - and valuable - that they should be concerned to deal mainly with the conceptual and practical problems of

that intricate subject. But one is still entitled to regret the absence of any sustained reference to the wider context in which those problems had to find their due place. Did Barnett and Plaitzky never reflect on what they, and their respective colleagues, as defenders of devolution, Northern Ireland, Rhodesia and the EEC, in relation to their primary task of managing the public purse? Did they never allow their own value judgments to be influenced by the relative priorities which they thought should be allotted to these problems of policy in the context of the Government's strategy as a whole? If they did, they have kept their conclusions to themselves, at least as far as their published books are concerned.

Their reticence makes it all the more significant that one of the first tasks assigned to the CPRS on its creation was the preparation of a study of the priorities of public expenditure which, when approved by Ministers, was to provide the guideline for the annual PESC review. It was to be drafted jointly with the Treasury, not by the Treasury alone; and the particular value judgment which the Treasury can be relied upon to import into any and every debate on public expenditure was to be supplemented by a value judgment of a rather different kind, a judgment responsive to the political philosophy of the Government of the day and formed with due regard to the relative importance of the objectives of national policy to which Ministers attached particular weight. It was an experiment of considerable potential significance; but it does not seem to have taken permanent root, any more than does the CPRS's other innovative technique, the periodical presentation to the Cabinet of a progress report on the Government's record of achievement in relation to its declared purposes. The CPRS itself, perhaps rather surprisingly, has survived two changes of Government. But, so far as can be judged from outside Whitehall, it seems to have lost sight of its original and essential objective; and the studies of particular topics and problems, which it has seen as constituting its main role in recent years, valuable though they may be, are no substitute for its primary function of enabling a Government to evaluate its priorities in closer and more perceptive relation to the totality of its policies and by reference to more inclusive criteria of value than those which the Treasury normally employs.

"At the end of the day," as Barnett observes, "no better way has been devised than having a bunch of men and women of varying intelligence (known in our system as a Cabinet) taking every conceivable form of advice and information, asking hopefully the right questions and coming to a judgment." If we wish to remain free and liberal society, he is absolutely right. But it is the provision of the advice and information which matters; and here we seem still to have much to learn. Our Victorian forefathers were familiar with a subject called political economy - something with a more comprehensive scope than the quantitative econometric science which is the currently fashionable manifestation of economics, something which allowed for judgment about the qualitative element in the daily lives of the ordinary men and women who constitute the electorate, something which came rather closer to the art of managing the affairs of a community with prudence, humanity and thrift. Both Barnett and Plaitzky allow us to infer that it is this concept, the concept of the good housekeeping of a nation which needs to be restored to both to political debate and to administrative practice if we are to be more successful than hitherto in achieving our ends within our available means.

The recently published *Year Book of Social Policy in Britain 1980-1981* (240pp, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £1.95, 0 7100 9083 8) spans a period of eighteen months and appears for the first time under the editorship of Catherine Jones and June Stevenson. In their introduction, the editors note "significant changes both within social policy and in the academic study of social policy" - changes which receive due emphasis in the selection of questions some of the conventional wisdoms. Thus, three papers examine the nature of the welfare state and the distribution of power within it; Nicholas Hinton and Margaret Hyde write on "The voluntary sector in a remodelled welfare state." Peter Beresford on "Public participation and the redefinition of social policy" and David Walker on "Conservative policy and local government." Three further chapters by Bryan Stoten, Malcolm Cross and A. J. P. Butler respectively deal with the National Health Service, racial equality and the police, while Adrian Sinfield writes on "Social policy and high unemployment." Edward James introduces a European perspective in his essay on "The role of the European Community in social policy."

Averting Armageddon

Michael Mason

JONATHAN SCHELL

The Fate of the Earth
244pp, Cape, £7.95 (paperback,
Picador £1.95).
0 224 02064 1

This book has had a very great success in America. Its British publishers have hopes of a similar enthusiasm for it over here. There is reported to be a boom in Britain for books questioning current policies on nuclear weapons. In America an upsurge of popular feeling of surprising dimensions is taking place against these weapons. All these facts are wonderfully encouraging, and the shortcomings of *The Fate of the Earth* which I shall mention should not obscure them. Its influence in the controversy over nuclear arms can only be preponderant on the side of reduction or abolition; its publication makes these outcomes more likely than they would otherwise have been. But it is important to ask if this book, which is likely to be much resorted to for arguments by the anti-nuclear movement, puts forward the best of the arguments, or advocates the most reasonable solutions; and, naturally, to consider the application of this American discussion to Britain and Europe. One of the best things about Jonathan Schell's undertaking is that he would surely welcome this kind of enquiry. *The Fate of the Earth* is an admirably serious book, avowedly hectoring and cutting corners, it arrives all the time to be as lucid and accurate as possible about its momentous subject.

The importance, for the prospects of disarmament, of getting the arguments right can be lost sight of, especially when the tide of protest is running strongly. One reason for the decay of the British CND movement of the late 1950s must be that it emphasized the likelihood of nuclear war, regardless of the intentions of the governments which possessed nuclear weapons. This claim of likelihood, at least in its strong version, came to be seen as exaggerated as the 1960s unfolded without nuclear conflict. CND still looks large in the consciousness of British and nuclear protest, but it was a movement that found little echo in America (other than in the unconscious appropriation of its symbol). There is an implication in *The Fate of the Earth*, which may dismay some British readers, that CND never happened: "only very recently have there been signs... that public opinion is stirring awake."

On the other hand the main argument against nuclear weapons advanced by Jonathan Schell was unfamiliar twenty or thirty years ago; indeed in its full detail it would have been unimaginable at that period. Environmentalism has intervened, with its attentiveness to a global picture, and to the interdependence of factors, physical and chemical, in the biological realm. The key notion in *The Fate of the Earth* is that the users and victims of nuclear weapons constitute a biological species which is dispersed on a worldwide scale and threatened by those weapons with extinction.

The argument can be stated as follows. The extinction of the human race would destroy all ideas of value, and hence we cannot even ask if it is right or wrong; it must be avoided at all costs. If there is any reason to think that a particular action will lead to human extinction it is a wrong action. A nuclear war that fully exploited current weapons resources might, on a certain scientific reasoning, have the associated effect of destroying all human life. Hence the possession of nuclear weapons is wrong.

There are several weaknesses in this chain of thought. Its first link is hard to assess, perhaps because it is intrinsically unclear. Mr Schell's favoured way of putting it is to draw a contrast between human extinction and individual death. We can assess whether an individual death is worth while; the grounds for such a judgment are not available if *everybody* dies. By this Schell means not only that moral arguments based on the consequences of a death for others are inapplicable but also, presumably, arguments based

on the happiness of the life that might be lived. But the latter could conceivably apply where the prospect is that of human extinction; we might judge that no human life is, or could be, happy enough to deserve protracting (for example, if most humans had been destroyed in a nuclear war and the remnant were all maimed and poisoned). Schell is not always consistent on this topic; he says in passing that "neither is there any commission of crimes in order to prevent extinction," which cannot be correct (and it is an important point) if extinction is an overriding consideration.

Does even a small probability that an action will lead to human extinction make it wrong? I would think not. If, for instance, this probability is known to be much smaller than the probability that mankind will be extinguished by a natural disaster. (It is a sign of Schell's honesty that he admits that nature can be this wanton: as far as we know, an event as calamitous as that which destroyed all species of large reptiles - a cometary impact, perhaps - must occur again and, like nuclear war, it could be only a few weeks away.) In any case the probability involved in Schell's argument is not a practical one, but the chance that a particular set of deductions is correct. He places great emphasis on the view that a nuclear war would deplete atmospheric ozone, which in turn would raise ultraviolet radiation to a lethal level.

Here, clearly, is an argument against nuclear weapons which could prove treacherous if it were generally embraced by the current protest movement. The mechanisms of ozone-depletion will certainly be well understood in due course. If they do, justify Schell's prediction his argument is fatally weakened, just as the Cuban missile crisis and the peaceful 1960s weakened CND's case. More immediately, there are many scientists who do not accept the sudden war/ozone loss/lethal radiation sequence, and we may be sure that the military planners will listen to them rather than to their opponents.

So *The Fate of the Earth* makes difficulties for itself by its social stress on the notion of human extinction. The author leaves himself, for most of the book, without any other argument against nuclear weapons, so that, oddly, it is almost as if these weapons would be justified if their worst possible consequence were the destruction of civilization in the northern hemisphere. For the last step in his case - the conclusion that we should disarm - Schell does, however, broaden his argument. The third section of the book is a discussion of deterrence and its contradictions. But if global extinction is not invoked here, local extinction is. According to Schell, deterrence is contradictory because retaliation would be pointless: defence of an annihilated nation, and without the assurance of retaliation, deterrence cannot work. Nevertheless, by this argument, there must be a level of "mutual assured destruction" at which deterrence would cease to be contradictory.

In other words, much of the tendency of *The Fate of the Earth*, both here and in the discussion of general extinction, is favourable only to the idea of a reduction of nuclear arsenals, not to that of their abolition. And because of its honesty the book actually contains, by implication, an argument for the retention of limited nuclear resources. For Schell is quite aware that the abolition of nuclear weapons alone will not solve our problems, and he is prepared to urge the huge political innovation - world government, no less - that must accompany it. "Those who favour complete nuclear and conventional disarmament, as I do, [must] admit that their recommendation is inconsistent with national sovereignty." Given that conventional war only involves a weak element of deterrence, the implication is clear: non-nuclear conflict between a Russia and an America disarmed of nuclear weapons can only confidently be averted if they abandon their national sovereignty. Faced with this choice between a horrible military possibility and a virtual political impossibility the

reader may feel that nuclear arsenals of a certain size are justified. Abolition may encourage conventional war, and this is a most serious reflection for any nuclear proponent.

Schell is not opposed to measures which will only restrict nuclear weapons, but he is, in his words, "aspirin" to bring down the patient's fever rather than the "surgery" which is required. European opponents of nuclear weapons, however wedded to abolition, may not welcome this analogy. Every measure of control will improve our situation (and in any case abolition will surely be achieved step by step: aspirin in this instance being a necessary preliminary to surgery). It is not just because of America's different tactical predicament that this American study is all-or-nothing about nuclear arms, however. To start with, the environmentalism from which so much of its argument flows came to the fore, and is still most influential, in America. And there are traces of an American religious sensibility in *The Fate of the Earth*. For an author who is very careful with words Schell surprisingly often calls nuclear war "unthinkable" and "unimaginable." In fact he "thinks" this event vividly and persistently. Others have found the end of the world quite thinkable, even compulsively so, as well: there is now a phrase in America, "Armageddon franks", which embraces every type of chit-chat, religious and secular, while suggesting that all really belong in the first category. There is an unfortunate short section of *The Fate of the Earth* (pp 156-64) in which Schell ventures to attribute certain modern phenomena to the spirit of a nuclear age. The argument is unhistorical, but it is the choice of examples that really gives the game away. Non-productive sexuality and abstract art are picked out for special attention, and disapproval. We may think of the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "because of the abortions which ye have committed... is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant."

But it would be quite misleading to press such comparisons. Schell's book has the elements, fleetingly, of an apocalyptic homily, but not the logic: no blame is being apportioned to any section for the advent of nuclear weapons. Indeed another honourable feature of the whole book is that there are no simple accusations of guilt. It contains, for instance, an extremely good account of the spirit of scientific enquiry: the reminder of the disparity "between the wishes of the scientist as a social being and the social results of his scientific findings", as exemplified above all by Einstein, is unfashionable and salutary. Schell sees the technology of fission and fusion devices as an unavoidable step in the progress of natural science, and one which we should not reverse. For him this knowledge is undeniably a knowledge also of the possibility of our own extinction - is not just the reason for the renunciation of national sovereignty, but the guarantee that the new global politics will sustain itself: "all human beings would join in a defensive alliance, with nuclear weapons as their common enemy." If ever such a utopia came about it would surely require for its motivation something at least as powerful as the "emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and visceral understanding of the meaning of extinction" which this book tries very sincerely to communicate.

"Einstein and International Security" by Paul Doty and "Einstein and the Politics of Nuclear Weapons" are the two chapters that form the section on Einstein and the Nuclear Age in the volume based on papers delivered at the Jerusalem Einstein Centennial Symposium in June 1979 which has now been published under the title *Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Gerald Holton and Yehuda Elkana. (240pp, Guildford: Princeton University Press, £26, 0 691 08299 5). Other chapters cover Historical Perspectives on Einstein's Scientific Contributions, the Reception of Einstein's Scientific Ideas, his Impact on Scholarship and Twentieth-Century Culture, Einstein and Developments in the Jewish World, and Working with Einstein: Reminiscences by Associates and Friends.

Tilting at convents

Edward Norman

WALTER L. ARNSTEIN

Protestant versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England: Mr Newdegate and the Nuns. 271pp. University of Missouri Press. Distributed in the UK by International Book Distributors. £15. 08262 0354 X

The "No Popery" cry today is associated with fringe groups and extremists of the sort whose demonstrations during the recent Papal visit in England discredited a lasting impression of slabbiness; so it is hard for us now to realize how central to Victorian culture anti-Catholicism was. It enjoyed a multi-class appeal. Public ejections against Catholics were easily contrived among the working classes, particularly in areas where there was competition for unskilled employment with the Irish immigrants. Among the intelligentsia, even among those most widely noted for their liberalism or progressive enlightenment, Catholicism was held to be contemptible because – in the words of Gladstone – it "enslaved the intellect". Gladstone's pamphlet against the Decrees of the Vatican Council, published in 1874, itself indicated the universality of the anti-Catholic culture: the essay was a classic of "No Popery" vituperation, distinguishable only by its erudite style from the popular literature of hatred.

Yet the attitude was not an absurd one. English national Protestantism was so linked in the public mind to the defence of personal freedom and constitutional liberty that the highly coloured rhetoric of the anti-Catholic tradition did not appear – as it must today – as a distasteful survival, but as an essential set of references for the preservation of national identity. Hence the seriousness with which public men took "the Catholic question", and hence the opposition of so many to the Emancipation of the Catholics in 1829. It is important to realize that even those who led opinion in the Emancipation struggle – the reformers who sought to concede political rights to Catholics – held exactly the same horror of the religion as did their most die-hard opponents. They differed only over the expediency of concession. As the subject of this book, a die-hard on Catholic questions, remarked in 1864: "I believe that Protestant Christianity is the foundation of the constitution of this country, and of the blessings it has conferred upon all classes, and I know that in consequence of the perpetual bettering away of the legal safeguards of this great principle we are committed to a constant struggle with deadly adversaries."

The Catholics were actually victims of their own discretion. During the penal years of the eighteenth century they had established a tradition of partial withdrawal from public life, in order to avoid the occasion of criticism – to reduce the opportunities of causing offence to their Protestant neighbours by a social enmity. Their withdrawal was never quite so complete as later interpreters of the penal code claimed; but Catholicism had, indeed, become a country-house and small-town religion, a resort, not to the ghetto, but to landed estates of a number of traditional families. But their very seclusion became suspect. The Victorian anti-Catholic tradition thrived on the supposition that Catholicism was secretive; that its practices were so shameful and so alien to the openness of Englishmen that its adherents purposefully lurked in the shadows and resided behind high walls.

The idea of what those practices were constituted the lurid centre-piece of the tradition: at the political level Catholics were still regarded as those awaiting the opportunity to overthrow the Constitution and to re-establish a kind of "medievalism": at the social and religious level, they were regarded as hedged about by superstitious beliefs ("the water which is good, so forth") and immersed in immoral conduct. "In books of all sizes, and from the pulpit of every Church," William Cobbett wrote in 1824, "we have been taught from our infancy that the beast, the man of sin, and the scarlet whore, mentioned in the Revelation,

were the names which God himself had given to the Pope." In such a climate of popular and intellectual assumptions it is a remarkable testimony to English political empiricism that concessions to the Catholics were made at all.

Walter L. Arnstein's book resurrects the memory of one of those who opposed them all. Charles Newdegate was a Warwickshire squire who represented his county in Parliament for forty-two years, from 1847. He was, even by the standards of the day, of extreme views on the Catholic question – or, at least, of extreme views in parliamentary terms. Actually he reflected very faithfully the general opinion of the country. After years of pressing forward a series of anti-Catholic measures he was successful, in 1870, in procuring the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons into the conduct of Roman Catholic nuns. The moment was ripe: opinion, stirred up by quite astonishing lies purveyed by the *Times* correspondent in Rome about the Vatican Council, then in session, was

ready to "liberate" the nuns from the servitude of the Catholic cloister.

Victorian anti-Catholicism had disclosed a suggestive preoccupation with nuns. In 1870, there were 216 convents in England. They were at least legal, since the provisions of the Catholic Emancipation Act, which outlawed monastic communities of men (but was never enforced), had not applied to them. But they remained a matter of unhealthy speculation and of what Professor Arnstein calls "the sexual rancours that lay behind the arguments of at least some of the proponents and opponents of convent regulation". Newdegate's hope was for a simple piece of collectivism: the creation of some sort of state agency to monitor the goings-on in the convents and to throw them open to public inspection. Legislation to regulate or to abolish conventual institutions was very familiar in Catholic countries in the nineteenth century – in Spain, in the Italian Risorgimento and, above all, in Latin America. There, however, the state's interest was political and

economic: it had to do with the wealth and influence of the orders. In England, it was purely ideological: the public were rancoured about the sinister life-style of the "unfortunate" ladies imprisoned behind the convent walls.

Arnstein does not set the English issue in this wider context, and his study might have profited from doing so. But his book in general is a model of its kind. It is entertainingly written, yet strictly academic in its use of source materials and interests. It never goes too far either way – to have been proportionate to the importance of the subject; to have been shorter would have offered an inflated article. He correctly sees the serious side of the subject – and of Newdegate himself, who now emerges from the occasional side references in parliamentary and religious histories of the period, and is accorded a proper evaluation. His 1870 Select Committee was converted by others into a harmless inquiry into the state of the law on conventual

institutions – his life's work never issued in success. Yet he spoke for a serious aspect of the common assumptions of his contemporaries.

As a study of the penetration of religious issues into Victorian politics, this is a truly splendid addition to Professor Arnstein's own previous book on the Bradlaugh question. As a careful revelation of an interesting aspect of Victorian popular culture, the book serves a secondary purpose, which may well value. The force and pervasiveness of the "No Popery" tradition surprised foreigners who visited England in the last century. When Blessed Dominic Barberi, the Passionist, arrived in 1840, he was astonished to discover feelings so much more inflamed than he had imagined. All the way from Folkestone to London, he saw effigies of the Pope burned amidst scenes of popular enthusiasm. But he was unaware that the Fifth of November, the date of his arrival, was in some degree exceptional. Some things were not quite so bad as they seemed.

Maxims and victims

P. J. Marshall

V. G. KIERNAN

European Empires from Conquest to Collapse, 1815-1960. 285pp. Fontana. £2.95. 0 00 63482 2

V. G. Kiernan's latest book explores an aspect of the history of European expansion which, for all its fascination for ordinary readers, attracts relatively little scholarly attention: the use of force by the European powers. In an impressively wide sweep over the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Kiernan catalogues the activities of the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the Russians, the British and the Germans, abundantly demonstrating the violent nature of much of Europe's contact with the rest of the world over the past 150 years.

Comfortable assumptions about the application of minimum force with clinical precision are easily dispelled. In European terms the forces deployed were no doubt often on a very small scale, but the consequences of such operations for indigenous societies could be catastrophic. Kiernan repeatedly notes the terrible disproportion in casualties between the combatants: European forces relatively unscathed, their opponents very severely mauled. The conquering armies required massive trains of porters who were very vulnerable to disease. Conquest was often followed by a long period of "pacification" marked by officially approved exemplary punishment for the recalcitrant and much unofficial pillage and retribution. Kiernan would no doubt endorse the conclusion of H. L.

Wesseling (in a recent issue of *Itinerario* from the Leiden Centre for the History of European Expansion), that the term "small war" can be a particularly misleading euphemism. From the non-European point of view, such conflicts were, Wesseling writes, "real wars comparable in intensity and magnitude with many of the major wars in European history".

Kiernan chronicles these wars with attractively even-handed compassion. His sympathies are of course passionately on the side of the victims. For instance, he describes the Moplahs of southern India as "the poor peasant people... Providence had created them, or so that second providence the British Raj assumed, to be exploited by landlords and traders... They were always beaten down, and left more dazed and furiously religious." But Kiernan can also sympathize with the European soldiers, their ranks remorselessly thinned by disease and inevitably seeking oblivion in drink, and even the pack-animals which "suffered and perished in untold numbers in every campaign". The latter-day conquistadors, men such as Bugeaud, Grabbe, Kitchener, or Roberts, are not figures whom Kiernan finds congenial, but he can accept that the builders of empires "display frequent gallantry, heroic devotion to duty, as well as much else".

It would be easy enough to treat this book simply as a narrative of violence and suffering which, deplorable as it no doubt was, lay outside the mainstream of European history and is only happily at its end. Taking such a view, the present-day reader can indulge himself in frissons of horror as well as in comfortable reflections on his superiority over an unrepresentative segment of his ancestors. To read the book in this way would, however, be to

mistake its purpose. It is a contribution to a new series called the "History of War and European Society", whose aim is to investigate "the relationships and interactions" between society as a whole and war and armed forces. Kiernan postulates a number of connections between the European past and colonial wars and colonial armies, and he suggests that they may still be casting their shadow over the European present and even over the future.

His analysis of such connections is for the most part cautious and tentative. The colonial armies either simply reproduced the outlook of contemporary Europe, nor on the other hand were they totally alien bodies bringing their own doctrines back to infect Europe. The truth, Kiernan appears to be arguing, lies somewhere in between. The imperial frontier attracted certain elements of the European upper classes and fortified their tendencies to authoritarianism and to militarism. Whether such tendencies nurtured overseas then gained a firmer hold on Europe itself seems to have depended on the vitality shown by other political traditions. In particular countries, although they could be influential in Irish history, preconscious were generally kept under control in Britain. In Spain, however, colonial soldiers got disastrously out of hand and, in French history, Algeria was of course crucial to the fall of the Fourth Republic but Kiernan believes that it had "an important bearing on the rise of Bonapartism, that precursor of fascism".

Colonial warfare had a context not just in European society but also in the societies brought into conflict with

Europe. Here again Kiernan raises interesting questions. Why were small European forces so often successful against such apparently hopeless odds? He insists that technical advantages were only of major significance late in his period. Europeans did not gain overwhelming superiority of firepower until the deployment of Maxim and machine-guns towards the end of the nineteenth century. Paradoxically the technological gap was perhaps at its widest in Europe's favour in the very last years of the empires, when airborne weapons were unleashed in ways that Kiernan describes with mordant distaste. What they were making their most spectacular conquest before the 1880s, the European empires placed their confidence in that most unsophisticated of weapons, the bayonet. Thus Europe's advantage lay in organization, morale and élan, rather than in technical superiority.

From the apparent failure of non-European societies to match European determination and power of organization, Kiernan draws conclusions which are controversial. He appears to believe that effective resistance to Europeans could only come ultimately from mass popular movements inspired by ideals of nationalism and above all of social transformation. He is inclined to disparage movements defending the "traditional" values. "Mahdism contained no message of social liberation and therefore could not win the support of the Egyptian peasantry. Even after 1918 'there was only too much danger' that the opponents of colonial régime would 'relapse into atavistic forms of struggle, especially where religion was still predominant'." The nature of "resistance" to foreign rule in Africa or Asia has in recent years generated a considerable body of writing. Most of those who have contributed to it would probably not accept the apparently rigid distinction between "traditional" and "modern" which Kiernan seems to be offering, arguing instead that "traditional" and "modern" overlap or run parallel in many cases. Japan is an obvious exception to his scheme of things. In this book it changes its role from being a victim of imperialism into being one of "the new imperialists outside Europe" without any obvious explanation.

So insistent is Kiernan on the impact of the old order in Asia and Africa and on the need for a total transformation that he gives colonial conquest credit "to a roundabout way" for preparing the non-European world's "eventual liberation which had to begin with liberalism from a great part of its past". Bleak and doctrine as this statement may seem to be, it is derived, like the rest of the book, from a sense of outraged humanity: "the total of deaths inflicted on Africa by Europe must have been trifling compared with the number inflicted on it by its own rulers".

James Fenton

Through the glass of introspection

Mary Jacobus

MICHAEL MILLGATE

Thomas Hardy: A Biography

637pp. Oxford University Press. £15. 0192117254

Hardy seems to become himself only when the O.M. of his Order of Merit (he amouged his first wife by refusing a knighthood) comes to stand for the Old Man of Max Gate. Photographs of the young Hardy – the "ill-grown, under-sized young architect" whose literary ambitions Emma later claimed to have encouraged – make him look as outwardly nondescript as the nameless "man/so commonplace" ("I have Lived with Shades") whom the older Hardy feared to recognize as himself. Old age brought the distinctive hawkish look of the Augustus John drawing; in its more benign manifestations, this was the look of an elderly solicitor or the country architect he said he would like to have been if he could have had his life over again. But Hardy, like Little Father Time, was old in his looks and thought long before then. When the journalist Henry Newenson saw him in his sixties, he seemed already on the way to death: "Face a peculiar grey-white like an invalid's or one soon to die... much wrinkled – and wrinkles, thoughtful and pathetic, but none of the power of rage or active courage. Eyes bluish grey and growing a little white with age...". Characteristically, Hardy himself entered into the spirit of the thing; told that Jacques-Emile Blanche had portrayed him as ten years more decrepit than he was, he merely commented: "time will cure that fault".

Hardy outlived himself again and again, as the volumes of poetry succeeded one another, each concluding with his epitaph. Posthumousness became his speciality, making him at once ghostly and self-immortalizing. "For my part," he wrote (aged forty-eight), "if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh." The famous Max Gate pyres of the later years – designed, like the ghost-written *Life*, to cover his traces – betray one aspect of that melancholy self-satisfaction. Inaccessibility. Stealing a march on his biographers, Hardy objectified himself in the impersonal narrative dictated to his second wife. Viewers of his corpse saw a "triumphant look on his face"; perhaps this was the triumph of having given his public the slip at last. Like "He Resolves to Say No More", the poem designed to stand at the close of the posthumously-published *Winter Words*, the *Life* refuses to tell all: "From now I will / Till my last day / What I discern I will not say".

The problem for Hardy's biographers is not so much his reticence as his half-life, his habit of regarding himself as a ghostly presence, at once watchful and self-watching. This is the troubled self-consciousness of "Wessex Heights", the "strange contrivance" of "my ample self that was". A telling phrase in the *Life* refers to Hardy as "the man with the watching eye". One of his literary ladies remarked: "In no other human face have I seen such a still intensity of observation". Eyed and eyeing are Hardy's words; the most anthropologized of all his epitaphs memorializes him as an observer ("He was a man who used to notice such things"). The man with the watching eye may have the illusion that he is himself unseen, protected from prying eyes. The "I" of "Wessex Heights" finds liberty only in evading "phantoms having weird detective ways". Michael Millgate's biography is by far the most detailed and comprehensive account of Hardy's personal and literary life now available. But its ways are not widely, or obtrusively, detective; or do we find in it any of the skeleton-rattling of earlier biographies. Rather, it is the workaday account – at once sympathetic and responsible – of a biographer, both alert to the complexities of his subject and wary of melodramatizing him. At Christmas 1905, Hardy told Clement Shorter that he and Emma were "having a nice old time" at Max Gate. Millgate's is the

narrative of these nice and not-so-nice dull times, both domestic and professional; but above all it is the record of a literary career as remarkable for its continuities as for its length. The strange contrivance of "Wessex Heights" becomes the familiar, even prosaic figure who died within a few miles of his birthplace and remained throughout his life closely bound to family, place, and work.

Towards the end of his career as a novelist, Hardy had wondered what the artist would be like if he outlived his art. His own Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man, *The Well-Beloved*, offers two alternatives. As first conceived and serialized in 1892, its grotesque dénouement left the artist-hero, Pierston, to a hideous fate – victim both of age and of the nympholeptic pursuit which had sustained his art but destroyed him. "Ho-ho-ho," concludes the author in the satiric voice of "A Meeting with Despair". Five years later, the revised first edition became a cynical fable of the ageing artist's embourgeoisement and loss of creativity when he resigns himself to reality and a marriage of convenience. "I, too, am getting old like Pierston", Hardy told his friend Edmund Gosse. For Millgate, the second ending is not only the product of a more mature vision, but also an example to profit by: Hardy intended no such fate for himself. Yet one is left wondering whether he hadn't glimpsed something of his own role as the good burgher of Dorchester – JP and local archaeologist – who lived the second ending, while participating imaginatively in the first. On one hand, life at Max Gate, the London season, trips to the continent, bachelor friendships with men, the literary and sentimental friendships with women: on the other, the many and many times which Hardy saw himself take to the glass of introspection, and recorded to his poetry.

But Hardy's assimilation into the clubs and drawing-rooms of the Victorian and Edwardian world of letters can also be seen as his most remarkable feat of camouflage. As "Hardy of Wessex" came to replace the uneven, auto-didactic, class-mobile Hardy of the earlier novels, so regionalism masked the idiosyncratic preoccupations of a writer who was often at odds with, or ahead of, his times. It also masked the business instinct of a novelist whose struggle to gain a foot-hold in the world of Victorian commercial publishing had turned him from the socialist satirist of the upper classes in his "lost" novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, into the melodramatist of *Desperate Remedies*. Millgate's account allows us to see what "The Wessex Novels" obscure – the tenaciously pursued literary career, the well-tended literary investments. Not the least of these activities was the careful consolidation of the fictional world of Wessex, which Hardy came to regard as a kind of registered trademark and jealously guarded from appropriation by others. Irritated by the romantic view of poets as impractical in the conduct of their affairs, he spent his days in the tree-shrouded Max Gate study, reading, writing, correcting proofs, and overseeing new editions of his many publications, almost to the end of his life. In 1920 he told a visitor that he never left a day go by without using a pen, and his motto was "To writing, as in all work, there is only one way – to stick to it".

Stick to it he did, both early and late. If there is one unresolved mystery in Millgate's account, it is how the diffident architect's assistant of the diffident architect's assistant of a novel in the first place, and then kept at it when his first attempt failed. Though Emma may have played some part in encouraging him, one factor must undoubtedly have been the economics of the fiction market-place. Millgate suggests, persuasively enough, that Hardy had come to recognize as a dead end the path of upward mobility chosen for him by his strong-minded mother, Jemima. After five years in Blomfield's London office at an annual salary of £110, he had no further prospects. Unlike his brilliant Dorchester contemporary, Cooper Tolboort – also a protégé of Horace

Moule – he was unable to take the way opened up to the new Victorian mortocracy by awards, examinations, and entry into the Indian Civil Service. Moule clearly regarded Hardy as a less promising student, and Hardy himself, though for a while cherishing the dream of going to Cambridge and becoming a country clergyman, had ultimately to face the reality of inadequate finances and academic preparation. His exhausted return to Bockhampton in 1867 allowed him to write his first novel while continuing to do local architectural work on the side, but fiction must have seemed a risky venture. What Millgate calls "the slow and painful development of Hardy's professional career" forced him to hedge his bets, and it was not until both of them had been written that Cornhill offered him £400 for *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1873 that he finally abandoned architecture.

As a boy, Millgate notes, Hardy had marked the following passage in Dilworth's *New Guide to the English Tongue*: "It is a commendable thing for a boy to apply his mind to the study of good letters; they will always be useful to him; they will procure him the favour and love of good men, which those that are wise value more than riches and pleasure." The tangible rewards of this literary work-ethic were

embodied in Max Gate, the hideous and by all accounts uncomfortable villa which Hardy designed for himself after a decade of novel-writing. Ten years later, he had made enough money to retire from the business of writing fiction altogether. Much has been made of Hardy's class origins and social mobility: they were, after all, important subjects for Hardy himself in novels like *The Hand of Ethelbert*, *The Return of the Native*, and *Jude*. Less has been said about the constraints imposed on him by the class into which he moved through hard work, literary success, and marriage to a solicitor's daughter with ecclesiastical connections. In many ways, these were the same constraints imposed on the would-be novelist and serial-writer – conformity and respectability. As the feisty satire of *The Poor Man and the Lady* or the sexual candour of *Tess* were compromised by the demands of his middle-class readership, so Hardy found himself living what one might call villa life in the suburbs of London and small Dorset towns, and finally in Max Gate itself. Much later, his appropriation was completed by the irony of an apostolic burial in Westminster Abbey. The ghoulish compromise whereby his body belonged to the nation and his heart

(fulfilling the letter of his instructions) to Wessex underlines the divisions and mutilations entailed in his institutionalization.

Yet, as Millgate makes clear, the other side to Hardy's inner divisions and estrangement from the past was a sustaining family loyalty. For all the harmless ancestor-worship of his later years (privately, he called *Tess* "Tess of the Hardys", feeding the fantasy that his family too had come down in the world), he remained part of the tightly-knit Hardy clan – designing a villa ("Tabothys Lodge") for his builder brother, Henry, providing for his school-teacher sisters Kate and Mary, and walking over to Bockhampton to visit his mother. Jemima's dream had been that her four children would live together, unmarried, in pairs. Thomas was the only one to marry, and Jemima never reconciled herself to Emma. Millgate speculates that his mother profoundly influenced not only Hardy's initial choice of career, but his erotic life as well. He even goes so far as to suggest that Emma "caught" an unwilling or at least unwary Hardy, perhaps by a ruse like Arabella's. Certainly the tale of Hardy's erotic susceptibility – lasting well into old age – conforms to a pattern of desire made safe by unattainability; many of

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Secrets of the centrales

Michael Ignatieff

PATRICIA O'BRIEN

The Promise of Punishment: Prisons in Nineteenth-Century France
330pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £21.42.
0 691 05339 1

The cell-blocks of the great nineteenth-century penitentiaries only felt silent when the footfall of authority was heard to approach. In anticipation of the warden's flickering eye in the inspection slit in the cell-door, poses of diligence and submission were taken up. But once the steps could be heard receding down the corridor, the poses were thrown off and the hum of prison language would start up again: the prisoners' semaphoric tapped out on the ducts and heating-pipes, the messages whispered to ears glued to the other side of the cell wall; the obscene and longing jokes scratched on stone, chapel stalls, soap tins. Even under the direct gaze of wardens sitting on their high chairs in the workshops, prisoners picking oakum quickly mastered the ventriloquist's art to keep the hidden eulogy of language humming.

Patricia O'Brien's ear is keenly attuned to this secret speech. She has recovered snatches of the "corporate argot" of the nineteenth-century confined; searched the picture files for drawings of the graffiti on prison walls; combed the departmental archives and found a treasure — the love letters, or *biftous*, which inmates wrote to each other in one late nineteenth-century women's institution. One woman wrote, "You will be like my child. I cherish you not love you as a daughter. I would like to hold you close to me," signing herself poignantly "ton amie dévouée". Another assures her lover, "I am your legitimate wife for ever," while a third day-dreams that when she is rich again she will build a palace, rid it of all men and fill it with women married to each other. The palace of her fantasy, O'Brien points out, has a prison's walls.

The language of love was whispered throughout the nineteenth-century prison, "in the workshop, in passage from one place to another, under the stairs, in the refectory (during reading periods and on days of bad weather), in the dormitory, in a word, everywhere". How deaf, then, are the historians who have taken the near silence of the official reports on the subject of homosexuality as the truth.

Imperial intimacies

John Eldred Howard

CHANTAL DE TOURNIER-BONAZZI (Editor)

Napoleon: Lettres d'amour à Joséphine
464pp. Paris: Fayard.

The main compilations of Napoleon's letters to Joséphine began in 1833 when Queen Hortense published an edition of 228 letters which she had acquired on her mother's death. Another score had already been printed and a similar number were to appear later. In 1929 Léon Cerf produced a six-volume comprehensive edition of 239 letters; Bourgaud, in 1941, offered 254; Savant, in 1955, 265; Hautmont, in 1968, 266. The indications of progress and critical apparatus provided by these later editions were all but perfect, though some datings and textual readings were corrected, but in any case the Hortense autographs were not available to them.

In 1979 the complete Hortense portfolio was deposited by Prince Napoleon in the Archives Nationales. A Keeper of the Archives has now edited this and all other known letters with scrupulous attention to the manuscripts or facsimiles: whenever these are known. The result is a volume of 269 letters of which 241 can be accepted as complete and almost word-perfect.

The remaining eighteen have

For women, O'Brien argues, love in prison was expressed in the vernacular of the mother-daughter ideal. It was a language affirming companionship and protection against the weight of the walls and the discipline. In men's prisons, there were these affirmations too, but also the entanglement of love with trade and power. In the hidden economy of the prison exchange system, the bodies of the young boys, the *grands* or *petits Jésus* as they were mockingly called, were used as objects of commerce, purchased by the muscular or powerful in return for cigarettes, squares of chocolate or a few grams of illicit alcohol. This, of course, is how it is today. What is different historically is not the practice, but the official discourse which consigned the practice to near silence in the reports.

The secret language of desire in prison was written everywhere, even on the bodies of the prisoners. In the text there is a reproduction of an etching of the tattooed torso of a twenty-eight-year-old male prisoner from the *centrale* in Mimes sometime in the 1890s. This a torso speaks. Over the left breast is a tattooed decoration for valor; on the right biceps a full-length portrait of Napoleon; on the right shoulder a depiction of La République herself, complete with Phrygian bonnet; on his left rib-cage a lady of pleasure awaits the prisoner at a fountain, while on his right rib-cage, another lady beckons to him from a darkened doorway. In the middle of his stomach, the prisoner has had inscribed the central image of anticipated bliss: a portrait of himself seated in a hot tub. He is smiling broadly above the steam.

These tattoos as O'Brien points out, are a vernacular of longing, a representation of the desired denied by confinement, but also a declaration of personal identity. In choosing the painful inscription of their faces at the point of a needle, a prisoner was marking his body as his own and thus refusing the nameless fate of the prison number. He knew the price of such an identity would be high. Tattoos were the first thing policemen looked for when seeking to identify suspects as recidivists. There were even registers of tattoos and other distinguishing marks to assist in directing the full force of the law at repeat offenders. Yet those who had tattooed themselves clearly preferred being named to namelessness.

It is O'Brien's attentiveness to these hidden vernaculars of identity, desire and defiance which sets her social

history of the nineteenth-century prison apart from its predecessors. Michel Foucault seems to have heard only the monotonous footfall of the wardens in the corridors. She has heard the blemishing speech behind the cell doors.

She has also tried to link the history of the prison to the political and social transformation of the society beyond the walls. She offers nothing to match the sweep and power of Foucault's generalizations, but she does succeed in tying the penitentiary prison history to the great landmarks of political change. She divides the story into four broad periods. The first, from 1790 to 1810, began with the revolutionary attempt to enact the good intentions of *ancien régime* philanthropy. Intentions epitomized in the worthy aristocratic figure of La Roche-foucauld Liancourt. The period ended with the Napoleonic decree of 1810 establishing *centrales*, the prison fortresses which were to dominate nineteenth-century punishment. The second period, coinciding with the July Monarchy, saw the heyday of bourgeois prison reform, led by Lucas and Villemé, in the first generation of the self-consciously "scientific" investigations of social abuse. This was the moment of Tocqueville and Beaumont's visit to the prisons of America, perhaps the only time before or since when prison discipline was a matter of fashionable conversation throughout Europe, with dinner-tables dividing over the merits of the Auburn and Philadelphia systems of separate or solitary confinement.

This period was brought to a close by the 18th Brumaire. Napoleon III's repression of the revolutionary hopes of 1848 was accompanied, behind the walls, by a tightening up of discipline and routine, and by the creation of reformatory and agricultural colonies for juveniles. The final period, inaugurated with the birth of the Third Republic, witnessed a bifurcation in penal policy on the one hand, the increasing incarceration of minor offenders, by means of fine and suspended sentences, on the other, an increasingly repressive treatment of recidivists. The penal colonies of Guyana entered their grim heyday. They were known as the dry gallows: of the 42,000 prisoners shipped out there after 1871 16,440 had died from sickness by 1885. At home forensic science emerged to assist in the identification and diagnosis of the "forensic criminal". Fingerprinting and Bertillon "mensuration" — the forerunner of all modern criminal record-keeping systems — appear in this

period. Criminology, late nineteenth-century positivism's discourse on the hardened criminal, makes its first grotesque and dogmatic pronouncements in the works of Tarde and Lombroso.

This periodization is helpful, both because it shows how closely French developments paralleled British and German in timing, but also because it enables us to see how closely the history inside the walls is tied to the history of political regimes outside. In

To bring back the King

George D. Painter

PIERRE RIBERETTE (Editor)

Chateaubriand: Correspondance générale, Tome 3, 1815-1820
553pp. Paris: Gallimard.
2 07 024315 X

On June 18, 1815, three miles out in his morning walk from the French court to exile at Gheel, Chateaubriand leaned against a wayside poplar listening to a long southward rumble of thunder. Ought he to turn back, or go on and risk a drenching? The thunder persisted, and now became unmistakably the oolae of a gigantic battle far away. The sublime catastrophe of Waterloo had begun; it was his paradoxical and anguished duty to hope, for the second time in fifteen months, that the enemies of France would liberate France by defeating Frenchmen, and so bring back his King.

And then again, on July 5, 1817, dismissed and ruined by that King, he heard the song of a thrush in a sister-in-law's park at Montboisier (as it happened, only a few miles downstream on the little river Loir from Illiers, the Combray of Proust), and regained, suddenly released from the prison of history into the timeless world of unconscious memory, his lost youth in the woods of Combourg castle, which he proceeded to write next day in his Memoirs. This, as Proust's Narrator remarks at the climax of his novel, is "a sensation of the same species as that of the *madeleine*". But Proust's further comment, that such incidents "inspired Chateaubriand to write pages of infinitely greater value in his

Foucault's account, the new prisons somehow slip into place beneath the surface play of political debate and revolutionary excitement. In O'Brien's account the two histories are twined.

Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe than those evoked by the great events of history, may seem more debatable. If art depends on the vision of the artist rather than on the nature of his subject, then the gulf of Waterloo need not be inferior to the thrust of Montboisier, when it is Chateaubriand who is listening. His declared purpose in the *Mémoires* was "to represent the epic of my time" as well as "to explain my inexplicable heart"; and the greatest of autobiographies is concerned as much with history, seen and lived during eighty years by a major observer and participant, as with the story of an individual mind.

These two moments of vision from the *Mémoires* are immanent though unmentioned in the every-day continuum of the new third volume of the *Correspondance générale*, which covers the first five years of Chateaubriand's career as a statesman. When the King returned, three weeks after Waterloo, France was (and after twenty-five years of revolutionary and Napoleonic desecration wanted to be) a constitutional parliamentary monarchy on the English model, with two Chambers, and even a Charter. In both houses a "pure" or "ultra" royalist majority, with Chateaubriand prominent among its leaders and supreme among its speakers and publishing propagandists, found itself unpredictably deprived of power for being more royalist than the King, under a government of republicans and imperial left-overs and fellow-travellers. It was Chateaubriand more than anyone who devised the tactics and created the climate of opinion which prepared the fall in 1820 of the King's favourite and police chief, the amiable sinister Decazes (there is something of him, I think, in Stendhal's Count Mosca), and the beginnings of "ultra" victory which brought the long high summer of the Restoration.

So the letters now become fascinating not only as the real-life background of a work of art (which turns out to tell the truth), or as biographical material, or as prose with a tang of genius, but as a new primary source for a vital and neglected epoch of French history. Of the 500 letters here presented only half were available in the imperfect edition of Louis Thomas, more than a quarter are entirely unpublished, and many of the rest virtually unknown, being gathered from forgotten periodicals or dealers' catalogues, or from the invaluable annual *Bulletin de la Société Chateaubriand*, which has just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. As before, Pierre Riberette has admirably performed his immense task of collecting, discovering, correcting from surviving autographs, dating and annotating texts which were hitherto so sadly dispersed, misread, misdated and misinterpreted.

We leave Chateaubriand on New Year's Eve 1820, retiring discreetly upstairs as ambassador to Berlin; at the victoriously bringing his party-leaders Villèle and Corbière (to be seen in his ambassadorial London, co-voy to the Congress of Verona), brilliantly successful foreign minister and ambassador, "ambassador to Rome in concrete time, and end with more than two more honourable and financially disastrous resignations, and the expulsion of a King who would never return again.

The rising Republican

Patrick McCarthy

DENIS MACSHANE

François Mitterrand: A Political Odyssey
278pp. Quarrt. £8.95.
0 7043 2344 3

As Denis MacShane states in the introduction to *François Mitterrand: A Political Odyssey*, he has drawn heavily on work done by other researchers, whether English-speaking like J. R. Franks and David Lowe, or French like Franz-Olivier Giesbert. But, if this book contains little new material, it offers a simple, sensible account of Mitterrand's political career. MacShane is a left-winger but he is never sectarian and his book will be extremely useful to the general reader who wants to know what to make of the Socialist victory in France in 1981.

As a man Mitterrand is enigmatic. MacShane depicts his various incarnations as *révisions*, archetypal Fourth Republic politician, stubborn enemy of De Gaulle and then Socialist Party leader. But to understand the man behind these many masks one would have to delve into the political culture of the Third Republic in which Mitterrand grew up. In 1974 the entire French political class knew that Georges Pompidou had cancer and that France was being governed by a man who was racked with pain and whose judgment might be clouded by drugs. As opposition leader, Mitterrand had every right to make this a political issue and yet he did not because his sense of privacy told him that Pompidou should be left to die with dignity. One cannot imagine an American politician taking this view but Mitterrand had grown up in a society where matters like illness, sexual morality and drunkenness belonged in the private domain. What went on behind the shuttered windows of a French provincial town did not form part of the political debate.

Mitterrand belongs to the world of Jaurès, the village schoolmaster, Péguy and the Dreyfus Case. His ignorance of economics, his concern for individual freedom and his language, which is flavoured with rhetoric and abounds in literary allusions, are all hallmarks of pre-1939 France. His long battle with De Gaulle was based on two complementary principles of Third Republic politics. The first was that, although France could be governed by shifting, centrist coalitions, these merely bridged the

gulf that yawned between the right and the left. The second was that this gulf existed because the battles of the French Revolution between monarchists and republicans, the white and the red, were still going on. Since De Gaulle had cast himself in the role of a monarch it remained only for Mitterrand to castigate him for destroying republican liberties. The presidential election of 1965 was a rematch between the revolutionaries of 1848 and Louis Napoleon.

When Mitterrand relunched the Socialist Party in the 1970s he gave it legitimacy by anchoring it firmly on the left. He spurred alliances with the centre in favour of the Common Programme signed between the Socialists and the Communists and, although the Communists deserted him in 1977, he has given them four, admittedly minor, posts in his government.

MacShane points out correctly that in the presidential election of 1981 Mitterrand profited from the mistakes made by the other parties. One might go further and suggest that his

supposed rivals conspired to bring about his victory. By sabotaging the union of the left and by supporting the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, Georges Marchais succeeded in reducing his party's share of the vote by 25 per cent. The Gaullist leader, Jacques Chirac, ran against Giscard d'Estaing in the first round and gave him only token support in the second. Meanwhile Giscard committed the gravest sin a professional politician can commit: by his personal arrogance and his bizarre friendship with Bokassa he managed to lose an election which he had seemed certain to win three months earlier.

Luck played a great part in Mitterrand's victory, while the dynamics of the French electoral system brought him a second triumph in the parliamentary elections. For two decades right-wing politicians had been telling the people that they must give their present a parliamentary majority. Now the French responded by voting massively for Mitterrand's Socialists. So it would be wrong to imagine that these victories represent a major change in French society or a

vast popular yearning for socialism. But Mitterrand has been given an opportunity and his success or failure in exploiting it will determine not only his place in French history — like De Gaulle he is morbidly conscious of history — but the next ten years of French life. MacShane reminds us that the chief economic issue of the election was unemployment, which was heading for the two million mark. Giscard and his prime minister Barre had prodded industry to cut costs and introduce new technology; unemployment was the price that had to be paid for modernization. But in the 1981 elections the French declared that the price was too high. Since many of them had been sacked they decided to sack Giscard.

Throughout Europe unemployment has become the most pressing problem and it is not to be exploited away as part of a temporary recession. It is both an expression of the stagnation into which the Western economies have fallen since 1973 and the result of a sharp decline in the older, labour-intensive industries like steel or textiles. Even if the Western countries

succeeded in reviving their economies, unemployment — and especially youth unemployment — will remain because the exorbitant new industries like biotechnology or micro-circuits are capital-intensive.

The French Socialists have affirmed that they will combat both stagnation and unemployment. Their strategy is partly traditional Keynesianism — expansion of demand and creation of jobs in the public sector — and partly socialist. By nationalizing the private banks and some of France's biggest companies they hope to steer investment towards sectors that will be profitable and rich in jobs. It is too soon to pass judgment on their experiment, although the devaluations and the resort to a wage and price freeze are not encouraging and might remind British observers of the 1964-70 Wilson government. But Mitterrand's policies are the first significant break with the orthodoxies of recent years in France, which is why his presidency is so intriguing and why Denis MacShane has done well to write this book.

A Balkan Boswell

Stephen Clissold

VLADIMIR DEDIJER

Novi prilozci za biografinju Josipa Broza Tita
1258pp. Zagreb: Mladost/Rijeka: Liburnija

Vladimir Dedijer's massive collection of "New Contributions to a Biography of Josip Broz Tito" would seem at first sight destined to amplify his *Prilozci*, published in 1953, the fullest account hitherto available in Serbo-Croat of the life of the Yugoslav leader of whom the author has been widely accounted the semi-official biographer. A former reporter for the Belgrade newspaper *Politika*, Dedijer fought with the Partisans and chronicled their struggle in a day-by-day diary which remains an indispensable, if necessarily subjective, source for any history of that complex conflict. Though never himself a prominent political or military figure, he was sufficiently close to the inner leadership to write with insight and apparent authority. He was closest of all to the movement's agitprop chief Milovan Djilas, and when the latter

broke with Tito in 1954, he followed him for a time into the political wilderness before eventually regaining to some extent Tito's good graces.

The *Novi prilozci* might thus have been expected to flesh out the earlier portrait of the formidable soldier-statesman whose cult the post-Tito régime has been at pains not to preserve but to intensify. Though much of the present compilation seems more relevant to the life and opinions of its author than to its avowed subject, such new light as it does throw on the latter is indeed still largely flattering. The same cannot, however, be said of the men who once formed Tito's closest entourage. The Yugoslav Revolution, like others, has already devoured many of its prominent children. Hebrang, once Tito's friend and Communist boss of Croatia, met his end in a Belgrade prison at the time of the post-war clash with Stalin. Asvo Jovanović, ex-Chief of Staff, was shot trying to leave the country during the same bloody Djilas, too radical in his push for democratic reforms, was disgraced and imprisoned. Ranković, the almighty Communist police-chief, was ousted on suspicion of plotting to challenge his master. Now Dedijer

has hurled a new fistful of bricks at his old comrades. Some are aimed at those who (like Kardelj, Tito's closest lieutenant) are dead, or (like Djilas) have been muzzled, and so cannot fight back; but those still in power are not only fighting back but making every effort to limit the influence of a book which is proving as controversial (and eagerly sought after) as any published in Yugoslavia since the war.

The reader dipping into this banquet may come up with many pungent trifles: details, for instance, about Tito's first (Russian) wife or his wartime mistress, or tantalizing references to the confidential papers said to have been found after his death hidden away in his widow's "washing-machine". But it is as a serious historian that this prolific and polemical reporter aspires to be, and should be judged. His present book certainly contains interesting new material, such as the exchanges with the Communist Party during the latter's early doubts about Tito's leadership of the Communist Party in Croatia in 1941. But in general this unwieldy work is a disappointment to the historian. The absence of any index makes it difficult to use. Nor are the "Contributions" to coordinate the forces of resistance against the enemy." No less far-fetched is Dedijer's contention that when the Partisans, before breaking through the ring of Axis and Chetnik forces in the famous battle of the Neretva, sent secret emissaries to discuss an exchange of prisoners and a truce with the Germans which would give them a free hand to liquidate their Chetnik rivals, they were justified in doing so because "the most aggressive sections in Great Britain, specially the group round SOE, were preparing to intervene by arms in Yugoslavia with the help of the forces of occupation and the Chetniks." And this at the very moment (March 1943) when SOE had recruited and was training Yugoslav members of the Canadian Communist Party to be dropped in to the Partisans to prepare the reception of a regular British Military Mission.

Further volumes of *Novi prilozci* are promised; that relating to the rift between Tito and Stalin should be of special interest, for even at his most controversial Dedijer is a forceful and stimulating writer. But will they be allowed to appear? If the Balkan Boswell, Tito is still undoubtedly a great man, but one whose feet, if not actually made of clay, at least have more mud on them than his heirs like to admit.

The established series, "The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant", has received a new supplement by *Ulysses S. Grant: Essays and Documents*, the first volume of a projected new series of occasional Grant studies, under the editorship of David L. Wilson and John Y. Simon (158pp. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, \$13.95, 0 8093 1019 8).

In general, however, he beats the tom-tom, wears his rooster feather proudly, and gives us what is to date the best celebration of a president whose humane concerns were encompassed in an intensely human temperament.

Hailing the chief

David Adams

JOSEPH ALSOP

F. D. R: The Life and Times of Franklin D. Roosevelt
256pp (with 260 black-and-white illustrations). Thames and Hudson.
£10.50.
0 300 01267 9

The story is not told here, but in October 1936 a Kiowa Indian sent the following message to James A. Farley: "After election Big Chief, he hit 'um tom-tom, put on rooster feathers and celebrate for W. H. CHIEF ROOSEVELT." In his volume on the life and times of Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Alsop celebrates the grandeur of FDR's achievements in what he calls a period of creativity that has had no parallel in any other free society in the twentieth century.

Alsop, a political columnist, is distantly related to the Roosevelts, for his maternal grandmother was Theodore Roosevelt's younger sister. He felt therefore, a "bizarre web of interrelationships", and a degree of flattery accompanied this remote connection with power. The kinship groups were well aware of their own prominence, and were proud to belong to the late nineteenth-century establishment of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans. Alsop uses the words of Edith Wharton as a point of

reference for their folk-ways at a time when these were already being challenged by new forces, forces that came to be harnessed by the Democratic Party under the leadership of Al Smith and FDR. As a journalist he was not an uncritical court commentator, but neither was he a WASP who resisted change and regarded Roosevelt as a traitor to his class.

His book was prepared to mark the centenary of Roosevelt's birth, and it rises out of the ruck of Rooseveltiana as an appealing and highly personal study that deserves the widest possible readership. Alsop's introduction, le ton-tom, put on rooster feathers and celebrate for W. H. CHIEF ROOSEVELT." In his volume on the life and times of Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Alsop celebrates the grandeur of FDR's achievements in what he calls a period of creativity that has had no parallel in any other free society in the twentieth century.

Most moving, perhaps, are those in the section called "Commander-in-Chief" which trace the ravages etched by the strains of war, coming to immediately after the trauma of the Great Depression. There is a full-page photograph of FDR, campaigning in New York City in the campaign of 1944 with a heavy Navy cloak around his

shoulders, campaign hat with brim upturned on his head; his face is lined and his eyes glint through spectacles that seem to be almost silvered by collected rain-drops. It is not fanciful to find portraits of death, more subtly present than in the famous Yalta picture where he sits frail, and almost ethereal, between the bulky and cheerful figures of Churchill and Stalin.

Alsop's essays do not seek to present a coherent history of the man. They are impressionistic, and include vignettes of moods and attitudes that convey the atmosphere more robustly than many more substantial volumes. His opinions are clever, but sometimes mischievous and almost cruel. Louis Howe, a fellow-journalist who became a political craftsman, was unduly and often looked like an ash-tray. His gaunt frame was racked by asthma, but he was only "outwardly repellent" to a caste sensitivity that was also displayed by the President's mother towards Huey Long. Rexford G. Tugwell gets cursory dismissal as a "headstrong, vain man — he usually wore a blue shirt the exact colour of his eyes" — a judgment that simultaneously establishes Alsop's powers of observation and his rejection of "pragmatism" in the WASP mind that was demonstrated by Sara Roosevelt when, despite her pride in her son's achievements, she installed a pay telephone in the hallway of

Springwood for the use of his political aides.

Personality looms large in Alsop's technique as, from the inside's position, he seeks to set the record straight. When FDR was assistant secretary of the Navy during the First World War what happened to him personally was more important than what happened to him politically, and the focus is on the crisis over Lucy Mercer, Alsop's insistence that the love affair was contained to the way that he suggests may also indicate his own subscription to a code of behaviour that, although certainly tribal, was perhaps more virtuous in theory than in practice. Lineage may not preclude passion. Alsop provides a "viable alternative" to the innuendo that has come to surround the relationship, but he is not himself totally immune from the temptation to suggest degrees of involvement that are at best unproven. Certainly Mrs. Lucy Mercer Rutherford was at Warm Springs when Roosevelt died, but to write that he was "in the arms of another woman only a few minutes before he drew his last breath" is cruel to Eleanor, for whom the author otherwise writes with sympathy and understanding.

In general, however, he beats the tom-tom, wears his rooster feather proudly, and gives us what is to date the best celebration of a president whose humane concerns were encompassed in an intensely human temperament.

Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

"I perceived fiction as the art of imaginative projection"; so Jerzy Kosinski is quoted as saying in the short biography which appears at the back of the new Arrow paperback editions of his novels *The Painted Bird*, *The Devil Tree*, *Passion Play* and *Cockpit*. But according to two reporters in New York's *Village Voice*, Kosinski's imaginative projection extends to his own past life, and the authorship of his books.

Kosinski sprang to fame in 1965 with *The Painted Bird*, although he had already published two non-fiction books under the pseudonym Joseph Novak. *The Painted Bird* reflects his experience as a homeless child in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe; in 1957 he arrived in New York having arranged a passport through the creation of a fictitious sponsor in the Polish Academy of Sciences, where he had studied social psychology. He continued his studies in America, and after his first book *The Future is Ours*, *Comrade* became a best-seller, he made a wealthy marriage. He has now published eight novels, and led, in quote the paperback biography, "a life novelists only invent in the pages of their novels". His activities as a mediator include playing the part of the Russian literary commissar Zinoviev in the film *Reds*.

Geoffrey Stokes and Elliot Fremont-Smith claim in the *Village Voice*, however, that Kosinski has invented details of his biography, that his non-fiction books were written with the help of the CIA, and that his novels are written with extensive help from "proof-readers" who are in fact unacknowledged collaborators. When I asked Kosinski for his side of the story he replied: "There is nothing in the story that is true, except my name."

Much of the journalists' case against Kosinski rests on his working-method: each novel goes through several versions that are set up in galley, proof-read and retyped by assistants before being set up in galley once again. According to the *Village Voice* those assistants have made authorial as-

opposed to editorial contributions, which Kosinski vigorously denies. I put it to him that he had an unusual way of working. "To be a novelist is to be unusual," was the reply. He says that all three assistants interviewed by the *Village Voice* say that they have been misquoted, and he points out that the books they worked on had already been accepted for publication when the assistants were hired. Finally, he says that an examination of his drafts and galleys will prove that he is the sole author.

Kosinski says that his life "has not been based on responding to allegations", so he will not do anything about what he calls the literary "thugs" of the *Village Voice*. He stresses his record as American President of PEN, where there were no suggestions that he had transgressed the ethics of authorship. In the meantime, is Kosinski living up to the reputation of the award-winning *Painted Bird*? Reviewing his latest novel *Pinball* in the *TLS* in May, Adam Mars-Jones found it "flashy and mechanical". But Kosinski has not lost the loyalty of his editor at Arrow Books, Terence Blacker. "I have no doubt that he is the writer," *The Village Voice* story is one incident in Kosinski's life that any novelist would prefer to remain an invention.

The various departments of the Arts Council General Board have stepped up the number of meetings between their advisory panels and their major clients. Perhaps they were anticipating the accusations of secrecy, weak management and fragmented policy levelled at the organization in Robert Hutchinson's recently published *The Politics of the Arts Council*. In the case of the Literature Department the policy of openness does not extend so far as telling anyone with whom these "dialogues" took place, but a glance at the published accounts suggests possible interviewees.

The impression given by the clients of these meetings, which take place

outside the normal process of regular grant applications, varies according to the client's own assessment of the security of his funding. All stressed that these were conversations rather than interrogations, though a summons to the Arts Council these days is bound to make you nervous. Grants are secure until early 1983, at least, although *Encounter* has agreed to a closer method of accounting, so that its £30,000 can be shown to be strictly tied to the literary, as opposed to political aspects of the magazine.

However, the Literature Panel has been taking a closer look at one client, the Poetry Society, with its allied Poetry Review and National Poetry Secretariat (£63,000, plus £7,000 guarantee), by means of a working party special report. This document produced a counter-report from the Poetry Society, which, while accepting some criticisms, questioned the accuracy of others. The Poetry Society is particularly concerned that the functions of the National Poetry Secretariat, which acts as a clearing house for subsidized poetry readings up and down the country, should not be devolved to the Regional Arts Associations. Devolution would be a serious blow to the Poetry Society, and it was able to produce evidence from the regions that they did not want to take the Secretariat over. Since it is now Arts Council policy that a client's activities cannot be devolved without the client's consent, the Poetry Society feels more certain that the Literature Department does not have it in its sights once again.

The answer to such special investigations appears to be: get your own in first. On being informed that it too was about to be investigated by a working party, the National Book League produced its own document. My understanding is that the working party on the National Book League will not now meet.

The American book trade is increasingly worried by the rising tide of censorship that has led to repressive legislation in several states (and even more ominously, to cases of book-burning). Nearer home David Britton and Michael Butterworth of Savoy Editions in Manchester are suffering in a similar way. Mr Britton has just served twenty-eight days in Penitentiary after being convicted of having for gain seven books found to be obscene. Mr Butterworth has a similar charge hanging over his head.

The books, which were seized at Savoy Editions' bookshop, can hardly be called serious literature: *No Place for a Lady: Something for the Boy*, *Mama Lila Drinks Deep*, *Maina Lila Tastes Flesh*, *Secret Starhood*, *Cruel Lips* and *Two Suspicious Girls*. Savoy

Editions admit that they are erotica, but there are aspects to the case which suggest that this is more than a matter of pornographers being caught out.

To begin with, the seven titles come from two American publishers, Grove Press and Venus Freeway. Savoy bought them as reminders, so they must have been freely imported into this country (in spite of H.M. Customs and Excise's censorial powers), and have been freely available in places other than Manchester. Secondly, far from hiding the books under the counter, Mr Britton actually went to the Manchester police and asked them what was and what was not permissible under the Obscene Publications Act. He received no satisfactory answer to his enquiries, and when this was raised as a mitigating factor at his trial, the Judge's comment was that if one thinks one might be in danger of committing an offence "then do not do anything which could possibly amount to one."

This last comment has serious implications for another aspect of Savoy Editions' activities, as publishers. Savoy have published a number of reputable writers, including the fantasist Michael Moorcock, Henry Treece, Jack Trevor Story and Mike Harding. Michael Moorcock is concerned that Savoy "are not exploitative pornographers, they are serious and idealistic publishers" which is why they have had financial difficulties. Moorcock is also worried that the way evidence was presented at the trial - misquoting passages were handed to the jury - could be used against his own and many other contemporary works. Such prosecutions could be brought against radical bookshops which carry feminist or homosexual literature. "It all just seems to be getting worse to me."

The misfortune of Savoy Editions is that they are based in Manchester, where the Chief Constable John Anderson is carrying out a vigorous anti-pornography campaign - 187 raids in 1980, 209 in 1981. Savoy Editions are hoping to publish the collected works of Hothcott Williams, *Severe Joy*, whose contents are likely to be at least as risky as *Cruel Lips* and *Two Suspicious Girls*. (John Calder, who was the case there would be no end to the business), the onus now seems to be on Mr Anderson to prove actual quotation. Kuznetsov's death in 1979 left his widow in very poor circumstances, while the promise of further books from his pen, including a novel and an autobiography, was not fulfilled. But there is a consolation for her in the fact that in America Pocket Books rapidly brought out a new edition of *Babi Yar* when The White Hotel became a success, and Penguin Books have scheduled a new edition for this Autumn.

The argument over D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* continues. You will

recall that there was a furious exchange of views both in Britain and America over the use that Thomas made of material in Anatoli Kuznetsov's "documentary novel" *Babi Yar*. The grateful acknowledgment that Thomas made to Kuznetsov's book, "particularly the testimony of Dias Fronicheva", has been generally taken to clear Thomas of any charge of plagiarism, but the story does not end there.

Kuznetsov's widow Jolanta has protested through her lawyer to Gollancz, publishers of *The White Hotel*. According to her lawyer, Thomas's acknowledgment "would appear to imply that the permission of the copyright holder had been sought and granted, and presumably the appropriate fee had been or would be paid, yet this is not the case." (The position is complicated by the existence of two versions of *Babi Yar*, a censored version that appeared in Russia in 1966, and the new version that Kuznetsov published in 1970 after he came to the West. This edition, which he stated was the only authentic text, is the one which Thomas acknowledges, and the one to which Mrs Kuznetsov holds the copyright.)

What kind of acknowledgment did Thomas intend? The British publishers of the "authorized" *Babi Yar*, Jonathan Cape, are staying neutral on the question of a breach of copyright, although Tom Maschler, who negotiated the contract with Kuznetsov, does not appear to think that any improper use was made of *Babi Yar*. "To the best of my knowledge Thomas made an 'inspirational' acknowledgment, but I haven't compared the two texts in detail." According to Gollancz's lawyers it would have to be shown that there are actual quotations from Kuznetsov if copyright is in question, and even then it would depend on how much was used, since provided the source is acknowledged, a certain amount of quotation is permissible as "fair dealing".

While it is clear that Jolanta Kuznetsov's permission was not sought for the "inspirational" use of her husband's material (and if that had been the case there would be no end to the business), the onus now seems to be on Mr Anderson to prove actual quotation. Kuznetsov's death in 1979 left his widow in very poor circumstances, while the promise of further books from his pen, including a novel and an autobiography, was not fulfilled. But there is a consolation for her in the fact that in America Pocket Books rapidly brought out a new edition of *Babi Yar* when The White Hotel became a success, and Penguin Books have scheduled a new edition for this Autumn.

Fifty years on: Coleridge's letters

The *TLS* of July 14, 1932 carried the following review by J. Middleton Murry of Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs:

What was to be done with such a man? It is no wonder that his married life with Sara Fricker was a misery. What is astonishing is that Coleridge managed to persuade himself that it was mainly her fault. At this particular moment his letters to her attain a truly portentous note of moral superiority.

Permit me, my dear Sara, without offence to you, as Heaven knows it is without any feeling of pride in myself, to say, that, in six acquisitions of mine, in the quantity & quality of nature, and in the quality of feeling, far of intellect, you are the inferior. If you read this letter with half the tenderness with which it is written, it will do you & both of us good.

The superiority in intellect Mrs Coleridge who was by no means an unattractive person, might have admitted; but it shows an almost incredible obtuseness of feeling. Coleridge to have limited, at any moment, on his superiority in feeling. Here he was, neglecting his home, inflicting intolerable anxieties and scarcely more tolerable humiliations upon his wife, and at the same

time arrogating to himself this superior sensibility. It is a striking and painful example of what Coleridge at a moment of clearer vision was to call his "moral morassus". But it is obvious that what Coleridge meant by "feeling" and what Mrs Coleridge, and we, naturally understand by the word are two quite different things. By "superiority in feeling" he meant the having more "feelings", the condition of "more than ordinary organic sensibility", postulated by Wordsworth. In this sense it was probably true that Coleridge "felt" more about his children, while neglecting them than Mrs Coleridge did, while caring for them. But feeling of this kind which is not merely imperative in action, but is actually increased "in quantity and quality" by neglect of action, is a moral disease of the most insidious sort, it converts, by a treacherous alchemy, a moral inferiority into a moral superiority, and seeps at the very foundations of life.

Even Coleridge's Christianity becomes suspect. Once again it tends to appear as a somewhat ugly mechanism for justifying his own superiority. He is prepared to be humble before God, on condition that he need admit to failing towards man. But, to be fair, it may well be that by this time he had ceased to be conscious of any failure towards men. His power of forgetting what it

was incoherent or painful to remember had become prodigious. At the same moment, probably within the same week, he could write to George Coleridge, who had been very justly offended by Coleridge's proposal to come to Ottery and separate from his wife there, that "God be my witness! I now uttered a disrespectful word concerning you to another person, nor ever for a day together even thought, much less spoke of you, without gratitude and remembrance of former times"; and to another correspondent that "it would require an Oedipus to determine whether the baseness, the inhumanity, or the insolence of George Coleridge's conduct to him was the greater. Such contradiction is only to be explained by the fact that Coleridge was by now genuinely responsible; he really could and did forget all that gave him pain to remember, even though the thing to be forgotten was but a moment past. And seeing that the main texture of his life was woven of things that gave him pain to remember, he lived in a state of almost complete divorce from his own actions, in a moral and metaphysical dreamland of the theological super-subtlety and abstruse research. His 'Ode to Dejection', prophetic by the end, he had stolen from his own nature, all the natural man - and all the natural poet - and the natural thinker as well.

Subsidizing Literature

Sir, - Despite Marghanita Laski's careful description (Letters, July 9) of the composition of the Arts Council Literature Panel and the qualifications of Panel members, she nevertheless confirms the criticism I made of the Arts Council in several respects.

She feels my suggestion to rotate the Panel annually or biennially wouldn't work because members would be unable to develop a sufficient understanding of its "procedure and potential". When I sat on a grants-awarding panel for the New York State Council on the Arts, the "procedure" was capable of being explained in a few paragraphs on one side of a sheet of paper. There was no complicated system to "work" because all the applications that met certain advertised, objective criteria were put before the panel for their judgment, recommendation and vote. If there were too many applications for the whole panel to cope with efficiently, committees of the panel reported back to the whole meeting. The "system" as such, ie, advertising, solicitation of applications, assembling the necessary supporting material, administering grants, follow-up reports, and so on, was the concern of the paid officers. As with the A.C.G.B. Panel, we were asked in order to reduce conflict of interest. Together with the frequent rotation of panels, the chance that the system could be manipulated by those who became entrenched was thus minimized. There need never be accusations that power is being abused by the officers if what they do is to facilitate and carry out decisions made by the Panel.

Much of Marghanita Laski's description of the (ideal?) Panel membership concerns civilized virtues of order and informed, intelligent discussion: the members must be well informed, disinterested, "capable of taking in and using new information", possess the ability to work well with others, and so on. These are worthy attributes indeed, and I wish they were shared by everyone who has the responsibility for making decisions about awarding public funds (or about any other thing, for that matter), but they aren't. However much one may desperately wish that all members of a group understand "the purpose and nature of argument", there are always those few who persist in misunderstanding with the majority. And this is as it should be to a body that reflects the way people think and act. My point in asking that the Panel be made more representative was that it should reflect the actual diversity of literary publishing here, because it was my contention (and that of Michael Horowitz, and indeed that of many of my fellow editors) that British literary publishing suffers unduly because the Panel is unrepresentative and therefore hostile to innovative and unconventional work. In this connection, I note Laski's point that there is not at present on the Panel an editor of a small-press magazine.

ROBERT VAS DIAS.
32 Cascade Avenue, London N10.

Robert Graves

Sir, - Mr Anthony Burgess, in what he wrote on myself in his review's treatment of Martin Seymour-Smith's book on the "life and work" of Robert Graves (May 21), has added to that book's already supplied falsifications as to my life and work - and character - falsifying the portrait of a literary chronicling of his own more culturally elegant manufacture. It is going to take some sifting of my own account of the realities of my total experience, personal and literary, to counter all the delirious nonsense with the most outrageous of Mr Burgess's statements. I am particularly concerned to participate to Mr Seymour-Smith's scheme for the biographical

enobling of Robert Graves by an accompanying biographical vilification of myself. This particular feat of the vilifying representation he has thought it appropriate to make of my husband and the story of our life for the edification of readers of *The Times Literary Supplement*. But, first, to supply these with the story of the general background from which Mr Burgess's review and other reviews by members of the British literary brotherhood of his literary and humanly shameful book have issued.

Mr Seymour-Smith appears to have achieved a resounding initial success in his endeavour to win for Robert Graves a quasi-posthumous publicity spread, exceeding in its headline spectacularity his subject's lifetime hunger for the like. He has elevated himself into a publicity figure in his performing as the dumb-waiter (pulling himself up with his ropes) for the delivery of the special fare he has got together for that special literary-world appetite of these times to which vulgar dispositions of taste are exercised with the air of authority of refined sophistication. He has needed an abundance of stuff of notoriety-appeal for his purposes, and has made the subject of myself the main staple in this, raising all the stores of falsification and misappropriation to which his status of off-and-on best-seller in the Graves establishment for the promotion of Graves fame-enterprises gave him access. Without this, his book would have fallen flat. It is bound to fall lower than flat when its personal savagery and intellectual lawlessness in its dealing with the subject of myself cause it to drop like dead-weight into a history-hole that will cover it up in swallowing it.

All the reviewers have spiced up their reviews by adding seasoning of animus of their own towards myself. In the interest of the presumed publicity-value of joining in Mr Seymour-Smith's capitalizing on Robert Graves's never-relaxed effort, over three decades, to darken out the truth as to myself with an image of himself puffed up to proportions of self-importance grandiosely with thieves from my thought and work, and general stance of person. Graves was not insensitive to the publicity value of notoriety-appeal. He cloaked his cultivation of it in the guise of aristocratic unconventionality, putting the onus of vulgarity on those who made him a subject of remark. This fundamentally vulgar man has now, under the management of Martin Seymour-Smith, attained to a notoriety-transcending notoriety-height that is evidently the envy of all these men of lesser talent for combining literary success with all-out unqualifiedly vulgar publicity.

Mr Burgess is perhaps more energetic than his reviewer-follower in focusing his annoyance with the Graves success-story that Seymour-Smith has bombed into their midst on myself - as, for all the lies spun round me in his book, some sort of reality, something upon which to vent their real dislike of it. In his attempt to discharge his ill-temper in my direction to an effect of self-composure, he seems very confident that however damaging any of this might be to my and my work's reputation, it is unlikely to be damaging to his publicity-credits. At this point in my consideration of Mr Burgess's ugly assuming a rôle (an ugly rôle) in the Seymour-Smith ugly lying upon the already variously ugly literary scenery of the times his worthless assemblage of perverse inventions, his easy slipping into denigratory writing on my husband, and relatedly on our relations and way of life, provides me with the proper matter for my letter's close.

The man whom Mr Burgess presents to readers of his review article, of the name, Schuyler Jackson, as "with little learning and no talent", was a conspicuously talented student of literature in his undergraduate years at Princeton University, and prominent there in poetry-contests and literary activity. He was concerned himself intensely with poetry, including the writing of poems,

to the editor

association with poets, development of a project for a press that would specialize in regional poetry, various poets committed to act as regional advisers, Robert Frost and Vachel Lindsay, friends of his among these (a start was made, but funds proved inadequate). Yeats was another friend. During a stay with Yeats in Ireland, Yeats introduced him to the Irish Parliament as his friend, the coming young American poet. There was friendship between him and Bridges. Roy Fuller has reported the finding of a book of Yeats's poems in Bridges's library presented to him by, as Mr Fuller oddly put it, the man who was later to become the husband of Laura Riding. He wrote for the *London Mercury*, was for a period a house-guest of J. C. Squire. He later worked on the editorial staff of *Time*, becoming poetry editor after some years of general writing on books. Graves, in a characteristically wicked falsification, publicly described me as having married "a farmer" (not named). The "farmer" reviewed Graves's 1938 *Collected Poems in Time*, as Graves knew well. Our citrus-growing and shipping activities of eight years freed us for later working on thorough study of problems of word-definition, completing the resultant book after my husband's death with the help of a Guggenheim Fellowship. He brought to this work the experience of a knowledge of the English language fortified by years of study of the linguistic material on which Charles M. Doughty drew for his *The Down in Britain*. This is enough for indicating how trashy Mr Burgess can be in the midst of his fineries of pretension to intellectual good taste and good sense.

Visualizing Francisco de Hollanda, then, as a reporter who certainly recorded his travel experiences graphically, it may not be unreasonable to guess that he would also have kept notes of his journey, including some record of his conversations with Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna and their friends, written down at the time. He was highly literate (he eventually wrote four treatises), and such a diary would of course have enabled him to give a much better account of his experiences to the royal family on his return to Portugal - an extremely strong motive for keeping it. If indeed this diary, or a note, really existed, they could obviously have been used ten years later as a basis for some part at least of the *Roman dialogues*; and this in turn could account for some of the startlingly lifelike touches which the *Dialogues* contain, particularly in the characterization of Michelangelo, extending even to his vocabulary, and to his ironical humour.

However, if I am suggesting that Hollanda's evidence should be taken more seriously than some modern critics (including even myself) have hitherto been willing to allow, that

The reference is to Hollanda's *Roman dialogues* which purport to record conversations with Michelangelo in the autumn of 1538. These *Dialogues* comprise Book 2 of Hollanda's treatise *De pictura antiqua*. The MS of Book 1 of this treatise has been completed at Lisbon on February 18,

Michelangelo

Sir, - My attention has belatedly been drawn to Thomas Puttfarcken's review (March 19) of David Summers's controversial book *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*. Puttfarcken notices that in order to reconstruct Michelangelo's thoughts Summers "has had to rely heavily on sources close to him... above all, Francisco de Hollanda... [who] has not found much favour with modern scholars".

The reference is to Hollanda's *Roman dialogues* which purport to record conversations with Michelangelo in the autumn of 1538. These *Dialogues* comprise Book 2 of Hollanda's treatise *De pictura antiqua*. The MS of Book 1 of this treatise has been completed at Lisbon on February 18,

Among this week's contributors

DAVID ADAMS is Professor of American Studies at the University of Keele.

VICTOR BROMBERT's most recent book is *The Romantic Prison*, 1978.

STEPHEN CUSSELL is the editor of *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973: A Documentary Survey*, 1975.

DONALD DAVIS's most recent collection of poems is *Three for Water Music*, 1981.

DICK DAVIS's most recent collection of poems is *Sealing the World*, 1980.

D. J. ENRIGHT is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-1980*, 1980.

JAMES FENTON's *The Memory of War: Poems 1968-1982* was published last month.

JOHN FULLER's most recent collection of poems is *Waiting for the Music*, 1982. His edition of John Gay's plays will be published shortly by the Clarendon Press.

NICHOLAS GREENE's *Shakespeare: Jonson, Milton: The Comic Contract* was published last year.

ROBERT HEWISON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-1980* was published last year.

ERIC HORSBACH's books include *Revolutionaries*, 1973, and *The Age of Capital*, 1975.

MICHAEL JONATHAN is a Senior Research Fellow at King's College, Cambridge. He is the author of *A Just Measure of Pain: the Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution*, 1978.

MARY JACOBUS is Professor of English at Cornell University, author of *Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads*, 1976, and editor of *Women Writing About Women*, 1979.

ANORLA LEIGHTON is a lecturer in English at the University of Hull.

BONA LONGLEY is the editor of *The Selected James Simmonds*, 1978.

PATRICK MCCARTHY's *Camus: A Critical Study of his Life and Work* was published earlier this year.

JOHN McDOWELL is a Fellow of University College, Oxford.

P. J. MARSHALL's books include *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757-1813*, 1968.

does not mean I agree with Summers, whose contribution to the debate is expressed in the following remarkable sentence (p.27): "Readers may decide for themselves whether the actual usefulness of the *Dialogues* [for reconstructing Michelangelo's thoughts] has answered the question of their authenticity." If that sort of approach to problems of evidence should start to prevail, we would have to say goodbye to reason and logic in historical studies.

J. B. BURY.
13 Lingfield Road, London SW19.

Edward Garnett

Sir, - May I add a footnote to Hermione Lee's biography of Edward Garnett? Garnett, the reviewer states, "belonged" to the Rhymers Club, but in a list of its members compiled years after the club ceased meeting in 1896, the "honorary secretary" G. A. Greene refers to Garnett somewhat ambiguously as a "permanent guest". He did not contribute to the two volumes of verse published jointly by the club, nor is he mentioned in any letters or memoirs as having been present at a meeting. One may conclude that he was probably joined the Rhymers on a few rare occasions either at their regular meeting place, the Chelsea Chess, or in private homes, but, like Oscar Wilde and other guests, found their solemn meetings beyond endurance.

KARL BECKSON.
Department of English, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

Cats and Ovens

Sir, - Maybe, as Charles Causley informs us (May 28), Geoffrey Grigson did once remark that a cat may have kittens in the oven but the result isn't buns. But is he claiming that it was Grigson who first coined this neat and amusing analogy? William Plomer, at the very beginning of his autobiography, *Double Lives*, wrote of his birth in the Transvaal: "Since nobody, if a cat happens to have kittens in an oven, regards them as biscuits, I should be no more justified in pretending to be a South African than in declaring myself a Bantoe." Who was copying whom? Or were both drawing upon some anonymous hoard of inherited literary wisecracks?

GORDON M. MESSING.
Department of Classics, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

MICHAEL MASON is a lecturer in English at University College London.

D. H. MALLON's most recent book is *Real Time*, 1981.

JOHN MOLE's collection of poems *Feeling the Lake* was published in 1981.

ANDREW MOTTON's long poem *Independence* was published last year.

EDWARD NORMAN's books include *Church and Society in England 1770-1970*, 1976.

GEORGE D. PANTER's books include *Chateaubriand: The Longed-for Tempest*, 1977.

CLIVE SINCLAIR's collection of stories *Bed Bugs* was published earlier this year. He has recently completed a critical biography of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

LORD TREND, Second Secretary to the Treasury from 1960 to 1962 and Secretary of the Cabinet from 1963 to 1973, is Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford.

E. S. TURNER's books include *My It Please: Your Lordship*, 1971, and *Amazing Grace*, 1975.

STANLEY WELLS is General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare.

كتاب من الأصل

The pattern history weaves

Edna Longley

JOHN MONTAGUE

Selected Poems
189pp. Oxford University Press. £5.95.
0 19 211950 8

P. J. KAVANAGH

Selected Poems
87pp. Chatin and Windus. £4.95.
0 7011 2618 3

John Montague's imaginative persona combines the love poet, the evoker of "memorial life" and the cultural anatomist. This last role, culminating in the grand if imperfect design of *The Rough Field* (1972), has received most attention. Yet the force of that sequence as on exploration of Northern Irish "tribal pain", of "the pattern history weaves" / From one small backward place", turned in the precisely captured Tynne scenes and portraits of *Poisoned Lands* (1961). There the sensuous self-immersions of Seamus Heaney are anticipated in poems such as "The Trout" ("To this day I can / Taste his terror on my hands") and "The Water Carrier". One stood until the bucket brimmed / In the misty smell of unspiced berries. That heavy greenness fostered by water. But Montague's "original townland" is more inhabited than Heaney's, and its violence and mystery more directly express "Ancient Ireland": "The rime and the chant, evil eye and nerved head, / Formorian fierceness of family and local feud". "The Old People" standing "Like Dolmens round My Childhood", together with other figures from *A Chosen Light* (1967), were later to give *The Rough Field* its communal backbone; while the darker side of Montague's early imagery – purification, putrefaction, super-satiation – perhaps unconsciously tapped the Ulster unconscious.

More conscious and programmatic, *The Rough Field* sometimes trades immediacy for formulaic leitmotifs: "Shards of a lost (Gaelic) tradition", "Again that note"; "Lines of history / Lines of power". Nevertheless Montague on the whole discovers in his home ground ("Garvaghey" means "the rough field") a plausible microcosm for Ulster's complications of race, place and language. On the one hand, "the severed head now chokes / to speak another tongue", on the other: "Names twining haid Scots and Irish, / Like Fall Bree, springing native / As a whitethorn bush". Douglas Dunn has criticized his historical determinism, the acceptance that "Once again, it happens". But, besides the inevitable fatalism in most contemplations of the Irish question, Montague's natural inclination runs to dignified elegy rather than political argument. Or the "positive art" recommended by Louis MacNeice in the face of fragmentation. *The Rough Field* mourns not only "A New Siege" in Derry, but also the way in which "the New Omagh Road", on top of the Plantation, has bulldozed the past. The deportment of the fiddler in "Lament for the O'Neill's" corresponds to Montague's own:

With an intricate & mournful mastery the thin bow glides & slides, / Amusing like a birdie poem, / Our tribal pain. . . . The layout of *The Rough Field*, as published by the Dolmen Press, once superbly supported this "bardic" formality. Now, unfortunately, many of Montague's longer poems suffer strange blanks due to excessive space left at the bottom of their first pages. And *The Rough Field*, already weakened by the restoration of certain poems to their former contexts, loses its sections and its separate identity in Part II of the *Selected Poems*.

Even before *The Rough Field* "pattern" and "ritual" were becoming favourite words of Montague's. "The Water Carrier" implies a technical conflict: Recovering the scene, I had hoped to stylize / Like the portrait of an Egyptian water-carrier. Yet halt, entranced by slight but memorized life.

Stylization advances in *A Chosen Light*, where "A Bright Day" celebrates "a slow exactness / which recreates experience / By ritualizing its details". Always a poet of statement as well as imitation – the root of his dilemma – Montague stylizes and ritualizes more effectively through rhetoric than through imagery. In recent collections his verse often renounces momentum in favour of stilled, statically posed images: "Beneath, white / rush of current, / stone chattering / between high banks." Although some of these images are beautiful – cattle "lashing the ropes / of their tails / across the centuries" – this seems a willful attenuation, reflecting the French and American influences (and influences from the visual arts) which succeeded Montague's initial Audenesque exuberance. The short line, that potential enemy of the dynamic, denies his later love poetry the rhythmic and verbal flash of the celebrated "All Legendary Obstacles".

All legendary obstacles lay between us, the long imaginary plain. The monstrous rock of mountains And, swinging across the night, Flooding the Sacramento, San Joaquin. The hissing drift of winter rain. The retrospects on divorce and remarriage in *The Great Cloak* (1978) lack this tension and intensity; just as

Although Montague ends *The Rough Field*: "all my circling / to return", he at least began as partly a country poet, an insider. P. J. Kavanagh, so different from his Irish namesake, is the outsider Nature-poet following in the solitary and very

English footsteps of Wordsworth and Edward Thomas. An address to his dead father shows him all too well aware of likely cliché: What would you make of me now, mulling / personal past / in public, and in this quiet corner at last? . . .

An apology, father, for a flight to / a whispering dark, / A hayfoot, strawfoot, clayfoot attempt to grow / Feathers and leaves, a wig of winds. . . .

An "Eclogue", which like MacNeice's "Eclogue for Christmas" opposes rural and urban perceptions, waxes even more ironic at the expense of "privileged pastoral". However, the "spirit" is not always the flesh of Kavanagh's *Selected Poems* justifies the humble contention of his rural spokesmen: "Perhaps there should be one man in a field / Standing absurd in a duffel coat watching a tree . . ."

Better at "mulling" than at "watching", unable to integrate the two processes in any consistent manner, Kavanagh uses too many adjectival, visual, colourful words:

Sky mother-of-pearl. Oyster-colour sun, / A furry lemon. Silent, full of allences. Birdless windless trees hold breath. . . .

In contrast, Thomas's "rain, / Windless and light" and Larkin's "bugle and

birdless silence" do not clutter by their telling adjectives. And, unlike Thomas, Kavanagh hovers indecisively between characterizing a whole environment of weather and season, and illuminating a single detail. The verbosity of *About Time* (1970) finds down to the greater economy of *Life Before Death* (1979); but the best thing in the first poem in that book is an emotion that emerges after some routine itemizing of "thin grass on hills" and "Dark leaves on sycamores": My dreamed adventures narrow down to / A lonely house with three souls in it that / I care

So much for now I wonder how I can / Ever to God or to anyone explain / I feel myself a lost and selfish man / Who am more fortunate than anyone.

With little new to say about trees, rain, lichen, "soggy wood", "dripping eaves" and "soaking bledges", Kavanagh develops a distinctive vein of domestic and paternal feeling: "A pale face, a hand relinquished at the schoolroom door". His true empathy operates with people, not nature. For example, happier and more romantic than Edward Thomas, he yet splendidly understands:

It would be more to / be welcomed in by an assured Edward Thomas. There must be doubt in heaven, to / accommodate him.

Sutton is modest, tentative and rather too content to appear decently baffled. The words "strangeness" and "strange" keep recurring – "How far our world, what strangeness", "we were aware of strangeness", "It is strange to think that . . ." – leaving a sense of mystery, but also a feeling of wistful vagueness at the centre of some very well crafted verse. Too many poems stop quizzically short of revelation – "stirring us each with some uneasiness", "still mirroring some thought / Which stirred within us", "Caught in some moment far from common ground". Too much of something comes very close to being nothing.

An anecdotal elegy ends with the lines:

And I'm afraid it's not much / Of an elegy for his broken life, but / still

What there is, is true. / to which it is hard to resist the rejoinder "but is such plain truth enough?" Can one really bow out of a poem with such an apologetic defensiveness and avoid raising doubts as to whether more might not have been attempted?

As in Elizabeth Jennings's book, the best poems are the most closely observed. The loquacious piece, "The Boofire", is excellent, and the delightful "Taxonomical Note" really does celebrate the vivid vocabulary of marbles:

I tell you, there's a poet in this county / He is probably eight years old. His head is full / Of coloured glass and words. He is / Unread, untutored, immortal.

When Sutton is not drawing attention to what he can't quite get at, he often produces many perfectly-phrased glimpses of the natural world: "The music of not going anywhere / That quiet water makes against the isad".

Anthony Thwaite on "The Poetry of Philip Larkin" and "Larkin's Recent" (up to 1973) Uncollected Poems. Harry Chambers's "Some Light Views of a Serious Poet", about "Larkin's 'Naturally the Foundation Will Be Your Expenses': Frederick Graham's 'Dragons', or Larkin's 'zodiac' themes; Alan R. Jones on "The Poetry of Philip Larkin"; David Thomas on "Transatlantic Culture"; and Philip Larkin's "A Caucus-Race" in *Suphama's "A Caucus-Race" in Larkin's "English Verse"*. There are poems by John Mole and W. S. Graham; Philip Larkin's own "Money"; and, perhaps most absorbing of all, the poet's workbooks of "Grass", crammed with variations, alterations and stanzas deleted from the finished poem.

"1945"

A string of the scarlet rubies of Ceylon / Cheated the Customs in a re-sealed tin / Of hulled coagulate sweets . . . to which I turned / My officer's blind eye. The carillon / Was all "St Budeaux" as I brought them in / By rail, the ship-boys, Devonport's draft returned!

Though not in fact: the halt at Keyham slept / In mild mid-morning and its signal-box / Absently clapped down its signal as / Wo, crawling from Southampton, smoothly crept / Home from Kowloon, from Trincom, from the shocks / And blithely endured alarms of the Moluccas.

My scapegrace sea-pups, what are the memories air / In us, grown fat? A too white monument / Tall on the Haze, ships' plaques, a name like "Howe". / The shut-out analog of the "Exeter" – / These are not what we want, nor what was meant; / Instead, the bells – in whose ears, than and now?

No one had said whom I reported to: / I skipped the train before the Dockyard, tore / In a lucky taxi up the marble-streets / And marble-bearded town that Hardy knew, / In a bawdry of bells, the mess-dock's innocent roar / "Get up them stairs!" pealing for her I greeted.

Where's that West Country where each bell peals, / Where an one's given cottonwool for bread, / Flowing with scriptural honey, milk, and wine; / Where the artificer guides the easy wheels / And an cranked labour blacks the overhead? / In women's arms, oh you who crossed the line!

Sheer hulk, Tom Bowling, I observed you climb / Staggeringly the Forder Valley tamed / Into industrial suburb. Novorossiisk / Road, a sardonic legacy of wartime / Naivety or duplicitously named, / See your arms flail at fame, betrayal, risk.

Somewhere a gross or ghostly woman plucks / At washed-out cottons, pats her hair behind / Absentmindedly, and measures an / Her bony breast something a battered box / Unopened in years has suddenly brought to mind: / A string of the pale small rubies of Ceylon.

Donald Davie

The Wanderer

Furnes mist of gun-metal, bits pricking / Into a sunk light – I need / one to speak with in this murk, / my fiftieth year its erchway, with fog

off the pole's lumbar region. / You fly folk, / I fasten on you a spidery form / quick as hindwood. And I can't

help it. A month back / the redcurrant's orb hung / twin seeds, like a kid / supported in its womb. Rain

spots our linked hands – a sharp-witted / heraldry of inva. Old stoms / bear the redcurrant, now ones the black, / and memory is both. Help my life

I starved the womb, now I want / what she doesn't – gives swaddling clothes / with a folded gram to the neighbour / swollen with redcurrant.

I've spent my minority, I'd rather / the staring wide-eyed world as bled. / The Thal funerary ship, rouged lips / on hugo watery wheels, scores the street.

and smouldering flesh – the emperor's – his cost / is a black fuzzy the flies, / they are tickled to death. / I will admit, I prefer love.

Jon Silkin

At the Porta Humana

We, the intelligent, / who print ourselves with words, / dream of a race as natural as nails / who talk by walking on footpaths / end whose clatter shines / through clambering of customs.

There, behind the words, / those artful facades for which / so many sacrifices are demanded, / even to the agony that hardens, / sits Stuffy, old signaller / of sickness, always wanting things.

To be loved, to be lovable, / to print 'not negotiable' / on monitors of high illumination – / that's his increasing touch, / turning perfection back / into porous dots and quevers.

Naturally, reef truth / in its comely self-protection / shuns this garden of drabs: / it takes holidays / among tragic brochures, / even to the pifant madhouse.

The galleries, the gardens / fill with its humanist harvest, / its Salvadores are impaled on beauty. / Stuffy sits sharpening pencils, / writing explanatory letters / about Invo to the psychiatrists.

And the great gong sounds, / ordering. Forget your fear of faces, / of the inexpressible, wra in the lift / with too much toothing – / populate the prose-world, / insinuate the verities.

But can there be a time / for plainness in this jazz? / Can the platos and arms of fear and love / keep a spectacles talking? Which words / will come through air unbeat, / saying, in to say, only what they mean?

Peter Porter

Jacob

This mother's darling, picksome in his pride, / Whm lives by miles, deolt, dumb-insolence, / Is sent out to secure a fitting bride / And takes the road in high self-confidence.

By noon there is an road – an shedows mmo / But his; the desert fight glares hard and clear, / A lucid proof that he is owed an love. / That what pervades his solitude is fear.

The young man sleeps, his head propped on a stone, / Exposed to starlight and the vacant sky: / The angola climb, descend, and he is shown / Their ladder's length drawn up from where he lies.

First light, and cold air chills the dreamer's face / Waking in silence, in an empty pinco.

II

By sunset they had reached a shallow stream: / The women crossed and he was left alone / Unable to advance. As in a dream / A man with features known but scarcely known

Stood in his path and in the dusk they elosed, / Strained elnew against elnew eliontly: / Who was the stranger whom his strength opposed, / The dark shape jealous of his liberty?

Down came, and locked within their stubborn fight / The traveller knew whose arms withheld him there: / "Bless me" he cried "Bless me before the fight / Dissolves your substance to realness air"

And one whom strength and skill could not confound / Was forced by benediction in the ground.

Dick Davis

Vat registration

D. H. Mellor

HILARY PUTNAM

Reason, Truth and History
222pp. Cambridge University Press.
£15 (paperback, £4.95).
0 521 23035 7

Hilary Putnam's targets in this book are some deep-rooted dichotomies which he thinks have for too long constricted philosophical and lay thought; notably, the dichotomies between objective and subjective views of truth and reason, and between fact and value. Right thinking, he argues, need not "copy" a wholly independent world describable in principle by "One True Theory" (his derivative capitals), nor yet approximate it according to *a priori* principles of rationality. Neither do we have to suppose that our thought wholly generates or defines our world, subject only, perhaps, to the weak and culture-bound constraints of accommodating sense-data and conforming to local canons of scientific enquiry. Putnam offers an alternative to these fashionable but problematic rivals: namely, that the mind and the world make themselves up together. Facts, including facts about the beautiful and the good (which in turn includes the rational), are whatever may rationally be accepted, and are thus internal to a world evolving jointly with our understanding of it, being therefore neither immutable nor just what *pro tem* we take them to be.

Putnam's sales pitch for his alternative starts with the "brains in a vat" puzzle, a modern embodiment of old-fashioned scepticism. Imagine our brains not in our bodies, acting in and on the rest of the world (as we take it to be) and getting feedback from it through our senses, but kept going instead in a vat of nutrients and wired to computers that reproduce exactly the feedback we get from the real world. Would they not think themselves embodied as our brains actually are? But how then do we know that our brains are embodied and that we ourselves are not just brains in a vat? Putnam thinks neither of his rivals can solve this puzzle, because the objectivist makes the world too independent of what we think of it, while the subjectivist makes it too independent enough. Objectivism implies that whatever we think, we might still be brains in a vat, which is incredible; subjectivism that brains thinking they are embodied makes them embodied, which is equally incredible. What Putnam thinks is that our being embodied and acting in the world is a precondition of our brain processes constituting thoughts about it, a precondition that brains in a vat would not satisfy. Brains in a vat could not therefore think even that they were brains in a vat, since we could, we aren't.

This solution to the vat puzzle seems to me dead right. Like many other pragmatists, including F. P. Ramsey in the 1920s, I accept Putnam's so-called "functionalist" view of our desires and beliefs about the world, deriving their content from their perceptual causes and behavioural effects rather than from our consciousness of them. I have indeed argued that even a conscious belief in something can be defined functionally, as believing one believes it, or that consciousness is not an irreducible element even of conscious thought. Since the inner processes of brains in vats would have neither perceptual causes nor behavioural effects they would not be beliefs at all, and *a fortiori* not conscious ones; just as computers lack beliefs, not because they lack our ineluctable consciousness, but because they lack desires to combine with their putative beliefs to cause their behaviour.

So, the content of our thought about the world, and hence the meaning of our statements about it, does depend on how we actually interact with it. The world and our thought are thus not wholly independent of each other. But it is the content of thought that depends on what goes on in the world (including the behaviour of thinkers), not the other way round. Therefore, shedding the Cartesian misconception

of thought as an exercise of pure consciousness, and the theory of meaning that goes with it, takes no skin off objectivity. The world remains as independent of our thought as it ever was; and Putnam's solution to the vat puzzle does nothing to support the rest of his metaphysics against its objectivist rival. (I am not going to discuss subjectivism, which Putnam does indeed dispose of.)

The fact is that metaphysics has more independent elements in it than Putnam allows. He repeatedly spoils his argument by lumbering his supposed opponents with views they need not hold, and in general by characterizing them both carelessly and tendentiously. I could, for example, think that true – as opposed to false – beliefs and statements are those that "correspond" to the world in some objective way without thinking that, in Putnam's phrase, they "copy" it. One thing may correspond to another without being like it; and, specifically, without being like it in extent. Correspondence theories of truth, as the ones usually and properly called, do not commit their proponents to a complete description of the world by One True Theory. For there to be objective truth, there need not be a whole truth, nor even nothing but the truth. There need only be a suitable correspondence between aspects of the world and such actual thoughts and statements as it contains.

Even then, the concept of objective truth need not be based on that of the correspondence it entails. The so-called "redundancy" theory of truth, for instance, which exploits the fact that thinking a belief true is being

aware of having it, entails that one must therefore consciously believe the world to correspond to any belief one thinks true, thereby explaining the idea of truth as correspondence without relying on it. Where the problem really comes, as Ramsey remarked, is in saying not what truth is, but what the contents of beliefs are, i.e. what makes a belief about one thing rather than another. The answer to that question must not of course now appeal to truth, as it would, for example, if it gave the content of a belief as conditions in which it, or a sentence expressing it, would be true. (That answer is not false; it is just no way for a redundancy theorist to define the content of a belief.) The functionalist answer, roughly, is that the contents of beliefs are conditions in which the behaviour that, with given desires, they would cause would be successful, it would gratify the desires. And if we then equate those conditions with truth conditions, we recover the pragmatic conception of truth as what makes beliefs useful, without the evident absurdity of defining truth that way.

This is no place to develop or defend such an account of belief and truth, which I mention only to indicate how naturally Putnam's functionalism may be used to overcome some of his own objections to objectivism. It still remains, of course, to account objectively for the intentionality of our thought and for our ability to refer in thought to specific objects. That is not easy, but it is by no means as hard as Putnam makes out, and certainly no harder for objectivists than for Putnam himself. In the simplest cases, when we refer to what we see, the mechanism of refer-

ence may just be the causal mechanism of perception, a fact that functionalism again naturally accounts for. Admittedly the mechanism is not purely physical, since there is something psychological on the receiving end of it and psychology does not reduce to physics. But that does not make our ability to perceive and refer to things magical, or prevent it being an objective, causal feature of the world we are part of. For I would argue, against Donald Davidson among others, that psychology need not reduce to physics for it to be both objective and subject to causal laws such as those linking what we see to our seeing of it. Reference, like intentionality, can be as much as observable and objective phenomenon as anything that physics and chemistry treat of; and objectivists are as much entitled to invoke it as Putnam himself is (on the weaker grounds that it is a feature of our conception of the world).

Given that objectivism can be defended in some such way against Putnam's objections, it seems to me plainly preferable to his alternative. No one really believes that "objects" do not exist independently of conceptual schemes, and even philosophers should not say what no one believes if they can help. Putnam's theory moreover, besides being intrinsically incredible, relies on a quite inadequately articulated concept of rational acceptability – which by his own lights seems to me no less objectionably objective and magical a relation between propositions and people (or their conceptual schemes) than the relations objectivists rely on.

Nor do I think Putnam's conception of rationality will span the gulf he complains philosophers have opened up between facts and values. That facts and values are connected we may grant; and we may agree with Putnam's strictures on those philosophers, economists and others who would deprive values of objectivity by limiting rationality to the calculation of means to ends. But even if values are as objective as facts, and reason can limit ends as well as means, facts and values are not the same. And yet again, oddly enough, Putnam overlooks a clue to the difference that he could have derived from his own functionalism: namely the way belief and desire may be distinguished functionally by their different roles in mediating between perception and behaviour. For values correspond to right desires much as facts correspond to true beliefs: so we might well base the traditional distinction between them on that between desire and belief, functionally defined, without making values a whit less objective than facts, or beyond the scope of rational assessment. I am not saying I know how to do it; but the project looks to me a lot more promising than Putnam's own reduction of facts to the ill-defined value of rational acceptability.

Although I disagree with Putnam's major theses, I hope I have made plain what a stimulating, not to say provoking, book this is. The estuary vivacity of Putnam's style makes it a welcome relief from much recent portentous philosophy, although it does carry the reader, and I suspect the author, too easily across difficult terrain – as if one thought to tackle Everest in jogging gear.

Double vision

John McDowell

ANDREW WOODFIELD (Editor)

Thought and Object: Essays on Intentionality
316pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £16.
0 19 824606 4

As ordinarily conceived, beliefs are states which figure in the explanation of behaviour, and which possess content. (I use "content" here simply as a label for what is specified, more or less accurately, by a "that"-clause in the attribution of a belief.) Recently, however, many philosophers have alleged a tension between these two features of the ordinary conception.

Consider a belief I might express by saying, when a cup is salient in my perceived environment, "That cup has coffee in it." An attribution of this belief to me, with the relevant cup mentioned in a content-specifying "that"-clause, might figure in a common-sense explanation of something I did, say, picking up the cup and drinking it. But now imagine that elsewhere in the universe there is a planet which, along with everything on its surface, is an atom-for-atom replica of Earth. My Doppelgänger there has (no doubt) a belief he might express by saying, "That cup has coffee in it." In attributing this belief to him, we must mention his cup, not mine, in the content-specifying "that"-clause; so the second feature of the ordinary conception distinguishes the state he is in from the state I am in. But the states that figure in the explanation of our cup-drinking behaviour are claimed, exemplifications of the same type; so the first feature of the ordinary conception dictates a different taxonomy.

This thought-experiment (a variant of one proposed by Hilary Putnam) is supposed to motivate a double-aspect view of such content-bearing psychological states. One aspect takes their representing of the world; the other embraces their explanatory role. Since one aspect supposedly imposes a different taxonomy from the other, our ordinary conception of these states – while unconsciously amalgamates two different sorts of interest – seems open to objection; it suggests, it plausibly unitary approach to theoretical reflection about psychological explanation.

Idea like this are prominent in Andrew Woodfield's collection, though there are divergences about the character of the recommended non-unitary approach. Woodfield, Daniel Dennett and (in the particular case of beliefs about perceptually presented objects) Keith DeRose are concerned to preserve, each in a different way, some approximation to the ordinary notion of content as a property of the explanatory states (the states I share with my Doppelgänger); whereas Colin McGinn denies that the explanatory states have content at all.

But why should we accept that in terms of explanatory states that my Doppelgänger of mine and I are indistinguishable? Common sense distinguishes a belief about my cup from a belief about his; and it takes the difference to account for a difference in our behaviour. I – I dare my cup, he drains his. If there is really only one explanatory state, this idea must be an illusion: the difference in our behaviour must be explained, not by a difference in our psychological states, but by the difference in our environment, interacting with a state we share. But, though there is no denying the availability (in principle) of an explanation having this second structure, it is not clear why we should accept that it would supersede the explanation with the first structure that common sense envisages (constituting a clearly better execution of the task which the common-sense explanation undertakes). If it were imperceptibly transported to the right moment, no doubt I would drain his cup. Behaviour would have to be explained in terms of the very state which explains my actual behaviour; and the alternative conception can handle the case by holding that the move would give me (without my knowing it) a different belief (one with a different content).

The fact is that the Doppelgänger thought-experiment constitutes no argument at all for the double-aspect view. Offering it as one merely betrays an unguarded assumption about psychological explanation: that psychology "in the strict sense" or at least a singled-out component within it, deals with (the literally) inner states that figure in the causation of (some) behaviour.

In his Foreword, Woodfield suggests

that explanations in terms of our common-sense "object-involving" states – my belief about my cup, my Doppelgänger's about his – would defy regimentation in terms of laws. But even if we grant that psychological explanation is of a sort to require such regimentation, this is inconclusive. Certainly it would be silly to look for laws relating to beliefs about particular cups. But the laws in question would relate to beliefs about (say) the double-aspect view. It is apposed, I think, that Descartes's own conception of mind was defective only in its dualism. Dualism represents mental states and events as either epiphenomena, which would be scientifically superfluous, or non-physical causes and effects, which would violate the laws of conservation. These troubles vanish if, while preserving the essence of the Cartesian conception (the autonomy of its topic from questions on which the subject is fallible), we continue to reconstruct its topic as something material; and this yields the envisaged subject-matter of the "explanatory role" approach to psychological states.

But this depends on a shallow diagnosis of Descartes's mistake. Descartes's most serious difficulties stem, in fact, not from the supposed independence of everything external – the very feature which what we might call "the new Cartesianism" seeks to preserve. In Descartes himself, these difficulties surface in the form of an intolerable epistemic gap: the new Cartesianism seems confident that they are safe from any such trouble, but there is room for suspicion here. Cartesian philosophy of mind, supported, and is supported by, a primitive philosophy of language. Russell's failure to understand Frege (partly explicable in terms of Russell's

Cartesian conception of mind) hangs heavy over many of these pages. Eric Tyrer Burga, whose thesis is radically anti-Cartesian, points it up by a contrast with a version, which he accepts, of the prevailing view about thoughts expressible with the use of indexical terms, such as "here", "I", "you", etc.; this version involves a recognition of the distinction between content and context which – once one appreciates the possibilities for demonstrative modes of presentation (in Frege's sense) – loses all motivation except some version of the new Cartesianism.

Philosophy of mind is very active nowadays, and in some quarters there is a healthy sense of progress, as the interests of philosophers converge with those of workers in a burgeoning area of science. My auspicious is, however, that even as cognitive science and the study of "artificial intelligence" take wing, the philosophy of mind, banging on to their tail-feathers, is being swept back into its dark ages. In some ways, indeed, things are worse than before: at least what Descartes misconceived was, clearly enough, the mind; whereas the new Cartesianism risks forgetting what the philosophy of mind is supposed to be about. (In some versions this is obscured, because the internal states of information-processing machines bear some resemblances to the content-bearing states of common-sense psychology.) Stephen Stich, at the end of his essay, hints at the idea that we might discard the concepts of ordinary psychology in favour of those of a new cognitive science, purged of the borrowings from "folk psychology" that taint its offerings so far; this strikes me as envisaging that the concept of mind might be not so much forgotten as officially abolished. It is high time for a critical examination of the assumption that what cognitive science is casting light on is something on which some dim illumination has hitherto been shed by "folk psychology".

Strange though it may now seem, I think this is a very valuable collection. Each of the contributions is, in its own way, admirable: clear, well-organized and resourceful. Reflecting on the points of similarity and contrast between the essays cannot but sharpen one's views about the topics discussed. Anyone interested in the notion of content of thought will have to read and digest this book.

FICTION

Topping and tuppung

E. S. Turner

GEORGE MACDONALD FRASER

Flashman and the Redskins
479pp. Collins. £7.95.
0 00 222661 8

It is nearly five years since we were last helped to the turpitudinous adventures of Flashman, the bully from Tom Brown's School days who, in the resourceful hands of George MacDonald Fraser, became General Sir Harry Flashman VC. In the last, and sixth, volume, *Flashman's Lady*, he was "chief stud and bath attendant" to a dark Messalina in Madagascar. Now comes a generous further instalment of his North American exploits, in which he ends up being scalped by a Harvard man in the shambles of Custer's Last Stand.

It is a two-part book, in which the unflinching Mr Fraser provides some pretty twists of plot. In the first half Flashy sets out West as a Forty-Niner in command of a mobile brothel and a

party of bronchial patients making the trip for their health; having reached Santa Fe our hero sells one of his female charges to a pimping priest for \$2,000 and decamps (he is known to the Apaches as the "Wind Breaker" because he can outride the wind). In the second half he is a Seventy-Sixer, accompanied by his lascivious wife Elspeth (with "the brains of a backward hen") and, as a reward for a mischief-making in Washington, is sucked into the battle with the Sioux at Little Bighorn.

Flashman and the Redskins confirms Mr Fraser as a crack story-teller. The challenge he faces, as always, is in deciding how outrageous he can make his lecherous poutroom without losing the reader's indulgence. What about the ethics of selling a whore to a priest? Ah, but the priest needs her for an Indian chief who will otherwise massacre mission folk, so that's all right; and the gallant vendor says, in Christianity, shall Flashy join in a mass rape of squaws whose men have been defeated? Shall he hold his hand when a papoose is about to be spilled? Shall he continue to "tup" his unofficial

more successful and enjoyable second novel *The Broken Tree*, which was concerned with the setting of her native New Zealand by Scottish immigrants in the nineteenth century.

Love and War returns to New Zealand to chronicle the effects of the Second World War on that country. Once again the relevant facts are made abundantly clear.

In the early hours of May 10 Hitler launches his invasion of the Netherlands. Three days later the Dutch Government set sail for England. Within 24 hours the country had surrendered. On May 12 German forces, for the first time since 1914, crossed the French border. Old-fashioned cavalry regiments were sent into the field against crack German motorised troops. The outcome was a massacre. In a matter of days the Allied advance, designed to cover the retreat of the Belgian Army, had been halted. Once again Hitler had used airborne troops with devastating results.

And so on in regular doses. Sadly, though, when Ms Sandys tries to move beyond the not exactly unfamiliar historical information she has gathered, things begin to go wrong.

The reader is offered a melodramatic story. George Trenwith and Anna Crechlow get married in 1939, only to be separated by the war. He enlists and is sent first to Egypt, then to Greece, and finally to Crete where he chooses to stay behind during the evacuation of the island, joins the local resistance, becomes a hero, and falls in love with a seventeen-year-old girl. His wife stays behind to run the sheep farm, gives birth to a son, and has an affair with a conscientious objector whose feelings of guilt ultimately force him to leave her. When husband and wife get together again, both are sadder and wiser, and their marriage begins in earnest.

Accompanying this central tale are the activities of a number of secondary characters such as George's shy friend

Apache wife with his customary ardour after learning from her own glowing lips how she won a ladies' turtleneck to see who could keep the victim alive longest? These are difficult dilemmas which cannot always be resolved by leaping on a horse and galloping hell-for-leather from the scene. For the record, the arch-soundrel is not 100 per cent lost to all sense of honour.

Mr Fraser is in love with the West and knows many of the scenes of the present saga – Bunt's Fort, that castle in the wild now painstakingly recreated, complete with early Victorian billiard table; and the field where Custer fell, which he describes as a haunted and deeply moving place. He has read a hundred accounts of the battle and is anxious to get the main elements right. Indeed, he may even have wished that he did not have to descend the hill of memories by having Flashman scalped there in evening dress, shouting "Don't shoot! I'm British!" But the show must go on.

Though tonsured by a tomahawk, Flashman did not suffer a complete lid removal, and the ravages showed only

Mike Fernshaw, who dies defending Greece against the invading Germans, a Mason named Willem Honeybee who becomes increasingly conscious of his ethnic identity even as he fights the white man's war, a childhood friend of Anna's who overcomes her pacifist upbringing and becomes an army nurse, and survivors from an earlier New Zealand Expeditionary Force who can remember Gallipoli and the desert. All these figures, however, are so devoid of life that their presence only adds to the prevailing air of thinness, just as the clumsily-done battle scenes, rather than lessening, actually increase the tediousness of the narrative.

In the extensive section someone is credited with having taught Ms Sandys that fact is "stronger" than fiction. If this is a misprint, it is a felicitous one, for it sums up the problem with her work, which is that the facts she deals with are usually stronger than her fictions, and refuse to be moulded by them into an artistically pleasing shape.

When General Yang presents him with Peking Men his wider dream is realized. Greenwood immediately relates to the old bones as to old friends: "There must have been likes and dislikes, attachments, protective feelings. Maybe there were other tribes, other species even, that were the enemy and reinforced the bonds."

Becker's plan is a sound one; Greenwood is not only a person, but also the personification of nature's vitality. He has an Edenic vision and asks rhetorically: "Had life once truly been a sista in the Garden of Eden?" Once Becker has made the moral dimension an important part of his novel it shapes up as a fable in the entertaining guise of a Wild East adventure. Greenwood's name becomes more significant as the book progresses, and he represents the hero who dares to defend his home against enemies like the headhunting wild Wa. In the end, Greenwood's strange survival has a direct bearing on the survival of his species.

Over and above his commitment to his mistress, his daughter and his adopted tribe, Greenwood has a duty to search for anthropological truth.

DAVID SERAFIN

Madrid Underground
212pp. Collins. £6.75.
0 00 231664 1

Superintendent Luis Bernal's second case opens with the discovery of a shop-window dummy, leaking real blood, in a carriage on the Madrid underground system. More sinister finds follow, in other carriages on other lines. Well written and neatly assembled; Bernal is an interesting character, and the atmosphere is thickly and authentically Spanish. A map of the Madrid metro is thoughtfully included.

DOUGLAS CLARK

Shelf Life
174pp. Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 05081 X

Douglas Clark's usual pair, Chief Superintendent Masters and Inspector Green, are called in from Scotland Yard by a local police force after the death, in suspicious circumstances, of a young man in a police station cell. Masters and Green are as good company as ever; it's a pleasantly unpretentious novel with a well-constructed plot and an interestingly new poison.

T.J.B.

If one small baby...

Laura Marcus

TOM HART

Cradle Song
154pp. Quartet. £6.95.
0 7043 2322 2

"But, sirs, I beg, do not give way to indignation! Each creature needs the help of all creation." Thus the refrain of Brecht's poem, "On the Infanticide Marie Farrer", the stark stanzas of which recount the story of a servant girl who, on discovering that she is pregnant, is forced to conceal her state from her employers, gives birth in silence on a freezing night, and clubs her child to death when it begins to cry.

Cradle Song is a version for the 1980s. The novel opens with an as-yet unnamed girl in a bed-sit, alone but for a crying baby; in a state of panic, both at her isolation and from fear that the child's noise will result in eviction by her landlady, she throws the baby against the wall. The "cradle song" of the title is the rhyme "Ten Green Bottles", which she sings to the dead child; its sinister aspect becomes clear in the final pages of the novel, when the bewildered girl, on being questioned by the police about the death, murmurs in response her own version of the lullaby: "And if one small baby should accidentally fall there'd be no small baby left to love at all."

The events which lead to the infanticide are recounted in one long flashback. The girl, Dorothy, is presented as a bright fifteen-year-old, involved in her school-work and ambitious for a future which will be "different". She becomes pregnant, however; her mother rejects her, and she moves in with her boyfriend, Les. They attempt to create the domestic security and comfort both of them have been denied in their family lives, until Les is arrested and imprisoned when the police discover that he has been stealing the furniture for their home. Alone after the birth of the child, Dorothy is driven to the act of blind violence which kills it.

Tom Hart has worked with disturbed adolescent girls, and his presentation of Dorothy and her story is sympathetic. Behind the squalor and the harsh outlines which compose a social worker's case-history: Dorothy's mother – depressive, suicidal; Les's mother – alcoholic, former prostitute; no father in either case. The author is careful in apportioning blame, and emphasizes problems of communication rather than poverty. Offering no solutions, the work sets out rather to provide a partial answer to the question "How could anyone do that to their own child?"

However, the difficulties of building a narrative from a case-history become immediately apparent. The author relies heavily on dialogue, which, partly due to the retrospective structure of the novel, is too often of the "You remember when your father died of cancer three years ago" variety. A desire for authenticity results in excessive and often pointless detail, yet the setting of the story remains curiously vague. Dorothy moves from "home" to "school" to "the hospital" to "a flat" and "a council flat"; this is presumably an attempt to avoid the "regionalism" of the social problem novels of the 1950s and 60s, but it offers the reader none of the sense of place which was one of their chief strengths.

Finally, though, the problem is not one of weak characterization, banal dialogue or unrealistic locations, but the more fundamental question of how effective the "realist" novel can be in the face of our social order and not preclude the use of irony, distancing or rather more artistry than is employed in *Cradle Song*. Brecht's lesson was that form is a political as well as an aesthetic issue.

The summer 1982 issue of *Critical Quarterly* (Volume 24, No. 2, 1982, pp. 23, 2011, 1562) contains a long review of Ian McEwan's novel, *The Comfort of Strangers*, by J. R. Banks, and an essay on F. R. Leavis's theory of language in *The Living Principle*, by Hugh Bredin.